UNMADE IN HEAVEN

GAMALIEL BRADFORD

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UNMADE IN HEAVEN

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A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

GAMALIEL BRADFORD

Author of "Lee, the American," "A Naturalist of Souls," etc.

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1917

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TO

CHARLES H. HOOKER

IN

MEMORY OF

MANY PLEASANT DRAMATIC

HOURS

PREFACE

"Unmade in Heaven" was not written as an argument for or against the Roman Catholic faith. The subject simply presented itself to me as one of great human and dramatic significance and susceptible of powerful theatrical treatment. Whether its full effect is brought out by the bare and direct method of handling that I have adopted is doubtful; but I am certain that treated by a capable dramatist it could not fail to move an audience deeply. It is true that the average Protestant American playgoer has not much interest in the monastic life nor in the priestly vocation. The idea of certainly breaking a girl's heart for the sake of doubtfully benefiting humanity through the Church will offend most Protestant girls as well as Protestant men. They may be offended, but I do not see how they can fail to be interested, if the problem is presented in the shape of actual flesh and blood.

For myself, I love and honour the Catholic Church, with certain reservations which it is not necessary to discuss here. I believe that the greatest need in American life today is the need of God. I myself feel utterly unable to suggest any way of satisfying that

need and I do not see how others who have been brought up as I have can do much better. The need can be supplied in some respects more fully by the Catholic Church than by any other known agency and for that reason the power and resources of the Church well deserve our study.

While, as I said, "Unmade in Heaven" has no polemical purpose whatever, I have been pleased to find that the analysis of spiritual experience given in the play is confirmed by those who have gone through similar struggles. One case especially interested me. Some years ago I wrote a portrait of General Longstreet and took occasion to make some mildly ironical comments upon his conversion in old age to the Catholic faith. My very gentle raillery was directed at the General not at the Church. It caused pious Catholics a good deal of indignation, however. Among others a literary correspondent, who had formerly written me with great kindness, expressed himself as grieved and pained in the highest degree. He had thought me tolerant and broadly sympathetic and now here I was speaking of things I did not understand in the terms of the bigoted partisan press. "Never again," he writes, "use such language concerning things and persons Catholic, until you have given some very serious study to the subject, which you cannot have done."

In reply I hastened at once to explain that I had meant no insult whatever to the Church. At the same time I sent my correspondent a copy of "Unmade in Heaven," telling him that while he might interpret the spirit of the play favourably or unfavourably to his creed, I thought it would at least prove to him that I was not quite so ignorant on the subject as he had supposed. In a few days I received an answer conveying a recantation more complete even than I had expected: "Now, what shall I say of 'Unmade in Heaven'? First it *is* pro-Catholic. Second, where did you get your remarkably accurate Catholic point of view, and atmosphere? How any one, not of the Faith, could have written that play is a marvel. How wide I was of the mark in saying in my letter that you should study Catholic things, when you must have already done so to an unusual extent." The writer then goes on to urge that the play should be produced and asks my permission to make some effort to that end. I of course acceded and that was the last I heard of the matter. The failure to secure production was natural enough, but my correspondent's utter silence suggests that, when the question was brought before higher authorities, who had less recent zeal and a wider knowledge of the American public, the strong Catholic tendency of the play was regarded as somewhat dubious.

This, however, should rather increase than diminish its general interest. The object of the drama is incontestably first to make people feel. If it makes them think, after they get through feeling, I do not know that any harm is done. What they think is of less consequence, provided one has taken even a little step in the enormous task of making them think at all.

GAMALIEL BRADFORD.

Wellesley Hills, Mass.

UNMADE IN HEAVEN

CHARACTERS

Mrs. Wade	Francis Hardinge
Eleanor Wade	Ned Wilde
Mr. Hardinge	Father Nelson

Time: the present. Place: Mrs. Wade's house in Boston.

UNMADE IN HEAVEN

ACT I

Drawing-room of Mrs. Wade's *suite on Commonwealth Avenue — most comfortably, not to say luxuriously furnished — pictures, rare foreign bric-a-brac, etc.*

Mrs. Wade, Mr. Hardinge *sitting talking as at afternoon call — she is a woman approaching fifty, full, not uncomely figure; red-brown hair; sensitive, intelligent, responsive features; appreciative of the suffering of life and of its humour — he is a little older, slight, short, dark; pointed, silken beard, just greying; eminently a gentleman, inclined to cynicism, but in no way discourteously or bitterly.*

They begin as if in rather heated argument.

MRS. WADE

But, my dear Mr. Hardinge —

MR. HARDINGE

But, my dear Mrs. Wade — [*Both laugh at their vehemence.*]

MR. HARDINGE

It's absurd, you know, at our time of life to be quarrelling about religion. Once we were — or must I say, I was? — lovers.

MRS. WADE

Say we, if you like.

MR. HARDINGE

Thank you. Then you marry — and I marry. And your husband is taken from you — and my wife. And you go and live abroad with your daughter. And she makes you a Catholic.

MRS. WADE

Oh!

MR. HARDINGE

Well, have it the other way round. And you bring your Catholicism — and hers — home here with you. And I can't get used to it. But then, why should I? You are my old friend, just the same. And I am yours — not to be parted from you by any whims or fancies that you may have seen fit to pick up in a fossilized, far-away world.

MRS. WADE

Just so. I came back from that fossilized far-away world — beautiful in its fossility, I call it — just to see my old friends. And — it wouldn't be

quite polite to call Mr. Hardinge one of the oldest of them, would it? But one of the closest and best. Oh, no, I couldn't quarrel with him — even over the dearest thing in life. Only — I wish we might agree about it.

MR. HARDINGE

[*Laughing.*] Which means, you wish I would take your view, doesn't it? Or, rather, your confessor's view. Oh, my friend, I cannot understand it. That you, with your keen, shrewd wit, your native sense of the absurd, should be willing to put such a fine intelligence into the hands of — of — well, never mind.

MRS. WADE

I don't mind a bit. My fine intelligence, as you are polite enough to call it, never did me any good. When I tried to cut the great problems with it, I cut nothing but my own fingers. Now I turn over the great problems to others who say they can cut them for me. They can't do worse than I did. And the relief is more than you can imagine.— You've met Father Nelson here, haven't you?

MR. HARDINGE

Yes.

MRS. WADE

Isn't he charming?

MR. HARDINGE

Charming? Oh — as only Irishmen can be. But for cutting problems —

MRS. WADE

Isn't sweetness the best method for cutting them? Or, let us leave the figure — for dissolving them away?

MR. HARDINGE

You see I'm not accustomed —

MRS. WADE

No, you're not accustomed.— And when it comes not only to trying to steal your belief, but to stealing your son.

MR. HARDINGE

But I should not lose a son. I should gain a daughter.

MRS. WADE

It's very sweet of you to put it that way and, of course, I think it's true. But you have such a bitter prejudice against Eleanor's and my religion that you very naturally might not relish having your son enter into it.

MR. HARDINGE

But Francis has not entered into it yet.

MRS. WADE

But he may.

MR. HARDINGE

Ah!

MRS. WADE

Eleanor is very serious, very earnest. I am not sure that she will accept Francis, unless she can convert him.

MR. HARDINGE

Nor am I — sure.

MRS. WADE

But you think she can't convert him?

MR. HARDINGE

Not at all. Nothing would surprise me in regard to Francis. He has vast possibilities. Whatever he does, he will do with passion. He may end the most intense of mystics, a solitary hermit — in a cell on an Asian mountain — alone with the Imitation and a skull.

MRS. WADE

The Imitation and a skull.

MR. HARDINGE

Or he may end a cynical man of the world. To be frank with you, I have always thought the latter

more probable. He seems to me likely to convert your daughter — not she him.

MRS. WADE

Oh, no. She loves him — immensely. But she would tear her love right out of her heart and trample on it, rather than give up her religion. She seems gentle to you — and quiet. So she is. But whatever she does, she does with passion — as you say. The Asian mountain and the skull would suit her. Now I, I confess —

MR. HARDINGE

Just so. It is comfortable to be fifty and feel one has escaped these things. They are an interesting pair; but they terrify me.

MRS. WADE

They do me. Can such intense natures be happy together? Won't they fret and wear on each other, especially if they don't agree?

MR. HARDINGE

Doubtless.

MRS. WADE

I have sometimes thought Eleanor would be happier with Ned Wilde.

MR. HARDINGE

Ned Wilde? Ah, yes. Her second cousin, isn't he? And he is not intense?

MRS. WADE

Not at all. Gay, airy, full of sunshine, and strange jests, and sweet mockery.

MR. HARDINGE

But she hasn't converted him.

MRS. WADE

I should say he was non-convertible.

MR. HARDINGE

Nothing in the skull line, then? Has there been any thought of this?

MRS. WADE

I have thought of it. I believe Ned has thought of it, as all sweet things flit through his wandering fancy. Indeed, I imagine it has taken hold of him more than most sweet things.

MR. HARDINGE

But your daughter?

MRS. WADE

Eleanor — no. She looks on him as a pleasant cousin, delightful to have about at almost all times,

especially in a gallery or a Roman ruin. Nothing else has ever occurred to her.

MR. HARDINGE

[*After a pause.*] We can't do much about these matters, can we? If Francis's mother had lived, she might possibly have moulded him. I have done nothing but make curious — and rather breathless — efforts to keep up.

MRS. WADE

[*Gasps.*] I know.

MR. HARDINGE

I have understood his temperament somewhat — way down in the depths of me I too have just a trace of the Asian mountain and the skull, as well as of the cynical man of the world; but as for controlling him, or educating him, or making him anything but what he is — ah, here he comes.

[*Enter* FRANCIS — *twenty-seven years old — rather tall, slight, medium complexion, dark, blue eyes — careful, but not affected in dress.*]

MRS. WADE

This is very nice of you, Francis. It makes a family gathering. [*Shake hands.*]

FRANCIS

Quite so. Well, father, were you looking for me?

MR. HARDINGE

Not at all. I visited Mrs. Wade before you were born. And shall, after you are — married.

FRANCIS

I hope so.

MRS. WADE

But we were talking of you.

FRANCIS

Of course.

MR. HARDINGE

And of your coming conversion, and Asian mountains, and skulls.

FRANCIS

The former generation had gay topics of talk, it seems.

MRS. WADE

It had. But the present no longer furnishes them.

MR. HARDINGE

And I discouraged the lady by telling her to give up all hope, that you were the product of generations of Puritan ancestors who hated nothing so

much as the Catholic church, that all their stiffness and their coldness and their rigidity had passed into your temperament and would never, never wash out.

FRANCIS

It does sound discouraging. But I notice you speak of the Puritans as if they were far off, even from you. And from me they are further still, I assure you. They had their place in the world and filled it usefully. I admire their stiffness. It was needed. But they are gone by — way, way by.

MRS. WADE

Dead.

FRANCIS

Nothing more so. As a matter of fact, they hated the English church, to which you belong, even worse than they hated the Catholic, and there is one thing they would have hated worse than either, that is our modern world, with its religion of comfort and ease and every one be saved his own way and let well enough alone; no religion at all, they would have called it.

MR. HARDINGE

I'm not so sure of that. The hatred of another sect is always fiercer than the hatred of irreligion. The most Catholic king, Lous XIV, told his nephew

not to bring such and such a man to court because he was a Jansenist. "All a mistake, your Majesty," said the nephew, "he's not a Jansenist at all; he's an atheist." "Oh, an atheist," said the king. "That's different altogether. Bring him, if you like."

MRS. WADE

But the Puritans — a few of them were my ancestors, too — and Eleanor's. Only, as Francis says, they are dead now — and dust — and a great way off. What have we to do with them — but admire and respect them? They tried very, very hard to make the world over — and failed.

MR. HARDINGE

[*Laughing.*] Just as the Catholics had tried before them — and failed also.— But this comes near arguing again, doesn't it? And I had better go. I leave Francis in your hands — without misgiving.

MRS. WADE

That is kind of you. But don't go, if you don't trust me. I had rather you stayed.

MR. HARDINGE

I trust you. The more so, as I am not very anxious about the result.— Good-bye, Francis. Don't forget the Puritans. [*Exit.*]

FRANCIS

Can I see Eleanor?

MRS. WADE

She is out unfortunately, making calls. She will be back in an hour or so, I imagine.

FRANCIS

I'm sorry.

MRS. WADE

So am I — on your account.

FRANCIS

I didn't mean to be impolite. I'm very glad to see you. [*Pause.*] But probably you know what I came for.

MRS. WADE

I can guess.

FRANCIS

I want Eleanor, Mrs. Wade. I wouldn't have believed any one could grow into my life so. I'm not a boy. Oh, I've liked pretty faces, and danced after them. But no one ever really distracted me a moment from my work. I wanted to succeed in the world. I wanted to be a great lawyer. I had means and prestige to go at it as I liked. And I only thought of marriage as something — something for

by and by. Then Eleanor came — and I want Eleanor.

MRS. WADE

More than to be a great lawyer?

FRANCIS

Differently. I want her — now. The other may come later — for both of us.

MRS. WADE

And Eleanor wants you. I don't hesitate to say it, because you know it. You seem made for each other. Nothing would please me better. But Eleanor is intense in everything. You know what else she wants.

FRANCIS

I know. [*Pause.*] But you wouldn't wish me, she wouldn't wish me to pretend, with her? It would be easy enough. Millions of men do it. Catholic, or Presbyterian, or Unitarian, where is the difference? You wear a frock coat to church on Sundays, pay the bills, and hold your tongue. She wouldn't wish that?

MRS. WADE

Oh, no, no, no — if she knew it.

FRANCIS

And *she* would know it.

MRS. WADE

Yes, *she* would. But — sometimes those things come about — as one grows older. At least you have no contrary definite belief?

FRANCIS

That's just the trouble. How can any one believe anything in these days? There is so much to know — and one can know so little of it. One is so ignorant, so hugely, helplessly ignorant.

MRS. WADE

Ignorant. Yes.

FRANCIS

How can any one come out squarely and say, I believe this, I believe that? I seem to myself to be drifting, drifting, with my hands spread out, faltering, groping, in an enormous night.

MRS. WADE

But that is your Protestantism, every one to settle all these problems for himself. Oh, I know so well what you mean, Francis. I have been through it all, weltered in it so long, groped, drifted, groped, hungered.

FRANCIS

Groped, hungered.

MRS. WADE

Our religion saves us all that. Just take one little step, reach out, there is the hand stretched forth to you. Throw your doubts and your gropings on to some one else.

FRANCIS

Some one else. But it seems quite impossible. If I cannot know, how can any one else know?

MRS. WADE

Why not? Some one who says he knows — some one who thinks he knows. If you thought you knew, wouldn't that be enough? It isn't knowing, knowing is nothing. That is the real secret. It isn't knowing, it is doing, loving. The Church gives you something to do, something to love, you don't have time to ask for anything more. Oh, Francis, the peace of it — the peace.

FRANCIS

But to take even peace from another man — like oneself.

MRS. WADE

It isn't the man. I don't mean to argue with you. But it isn't the man. It isn't the priest. It is the

ages, the solemn dignity, the piled up weight of grandeur, behind the man — oh, Father Nelson —

[*Enter* FATHER NELSON — *sixty years old — full figure — medium height — dark, brown eyes — expression of extreme gentle kindness, with much wit and joviality.*]

FATHER NELSON

Mrs. Wade. [*Shakes hands.*] Mr. Hardinge. [*Shakes hands.*] I'm not a fighter, am I?

MRS. WADE

A fighter? Certainly not.

FRANCIS

But your profession — ?

FATHER NELSON

Oh, well, yes, my profession — to fight the devil. But you aren't the devil — nor Mrs. Wade. And I can't find out who is? I have a horrible suspicion sometimes that I should love him if I met him.

MRS. WADE

But it sounds as if you had met him — just now.

FATHER NELSON

Does it? I met a personage who evidently disliked my appearance. And I could have loved him,

but he seemed not to love me. Argued with me — in fact, abused me. Asked me if I thought any one could get to heaven by my road. I said, I hoped so. He assured me not, that my influence was in the other direction. I said, I was sorry. Then he gave me a pamphlet and went away.

FRANCIS

What was the pamphlet?

FATHER NELSON

"The Door of the Confessional, the Gate of Hell." That was the title. Hot, wasn't it?

MRS. WADE

What do such people mean?

FATHER NELSON

Well, he was a fighter, you see, lots of superfluous energy. But it really seems as if he and I might work together. I don't want people to go to hell any more than he does.

MRS. WADE

I should think not.

FATHER NELSON

In these days surely there's no religion in the world to throw away. People have too much money,

too much culture, too much style, too much liberty, it seems sometimes as if some of them had too much virtue; but I haven't met many that had too much religion. Perhaps mine is better than none. If my friend with the pamphlets could only see it so!

MRS. WADE

That's just what Mr. Hardinge was saying to his father. That, if the old Puritans came to life again, they would prefer our religion to the modern world's irreligion.

FATHER NELSON

H'm. Then my Hell-Gate friend was not an old Puritan. But doubtless you are right, Mr. Hardinge. Any religion is better than no religion.

MRS. WADE

Of course it is.

FATHER NELSON

Any religion is better than the smug conventionality of the present day, which believes its virtue can get along without religion, which is perfectly satisfied with its isms and its ologies, and cares no more for heaven than it does for hell. But, you'll excuse me, Mr. Hardinge, I didn't quite expect —

FRANCIS

To hear such doctrine from me. But you might. Nobody loves religion more than I, or feels the need of it more. Nobody feels more the emptiness of modern virtue, or the hollowness of modern conventionality, or the ridiculous pretence of isms and ologies.

FATHER NELSON

But —

FRANCIS

I hate it. And I long for something different. Oh, I understand the beauty of the religious life as your people know it. I have visited the Certosa at Florence, with the blue Tuscan sky over its quiet; and the thought of peace in those cells, of a life all inward, instead of all outward, a life to oneself, instead of to others, and so through oneself to God — oh, I know what it means. You can't tell me about it.

MRS. WADE

Then, why, Francis, why —?

FRANCIS

But one must believe, mustn't one? The isms and the ologies take away, but they do not give. I rather envy Father Nelson's friend of the pamphlet.

As the other fellow said, it is lovely to believe, even in hell.

[*Enter* NED WILDE — *medium height — slight, yet vigorous — light hair, grey eyes — very easy, natural, and spontaneous in manner.*]

MRS. WADE

Oh, Ned.

NED

Good-afternoon all. Francis. [*Easy gesture.*] Father Nelson. [*A trifle, only a trifle, more formal. Does not shake hands with any one.*] So you've got him in a corner, trying to convert him. I feel for you, Francis. I really do. You have no idea — of course Father Nelson has, because he's assisted at similar festivities — but you, Francis, can have no idea of the martyrdom they've inflicted on me. This lady and her daughter are very sweet cousins of mine, and I love them, and I stuck to them in Europe as long as I could. But you've no idea —. In a cathedral they talked religion to me, of course. But you wouldn't have expected it at the comic opera. If we were looking at a Madonna, sanctity came up because the subject suggested it. If we were looking at a heathen goddess, décolleté to her ankles — and further — sanctity came up, because the subject didn't suggest it. In Switzerland they took me into

a valley and talked humility. Then they took me up on to a high mountain and offered me all the kingdoms of the earth, if I would bow down and worship. But I wouldn't. I'm soft, but I'm elastic, I receive impressions like water, and retain them like water. So you see, Father — [*Addressing* FATHER NELSON *suddenly and directly*] — in spite of all their efforts, I'm just exactly where I was.

FRANCIS

Where is that?

NED

I don't know. Do you?

MRS. WADE

Francis has just been giving us a rhapsody on the Certosa and the monastic life. It astonished us.

NED

Did it? It doesn't me. Francis and I are different. He is not soft — and not elastic. He has the stuff of mysticism in him. Keep at it and you will make an impression that will stay — perhaps more of a one than you want. Oh, yes, he has it in him, great ideals, long efforts, immense sacrifices. I can see him now, in monkish robes, thin, emaciated, heaven-worn, his keen, stern features all lit with an enthusiasm which Eleanor knows, but you do not

know, cousin Florence, nor I, nor this placid Father Nelson. Nothing would suit him better than to give up what he loved best in the world for — a dream, shall I say? Take my advice. Let him alone. Persons of his temperament and Eleanor's need quieting, not stimulus, Mellin's food, not brandy. Keep ideas and enthusiasm out of his way. Take him every afternoon in the motor for an airing. Let his mental diet be law and Unitarianism. Then he will grow fat and flourish and do you credit. But don't try to convert him. You'll be sorry. Won't they, Francis?

FRANCIS

How well you understand me!

NED

Don't I?

MRS. WADE

Have you bestowed any of this valuable advice on Eleanor?

NED

She doesn't care for my advice — or me either. Dreams! She lives in a world of dreams, bright, blinding dreams, which dazzle her vision for all sublunary things. Can't you see it in her eyes — the dreams in them? I could look into them for hours and read such strange, strange things — just as you

sit and look down into a blue, deep, mountain pool. To be sure, I live in a world of dreams too. But I know they are dreams. She doesn't. That makes such a wonderful difference.

FRANCIS

As you seem to want to talk me and my affairs over, perhaps you could do it better in my absence.

NED

Not a bit. It would be less agreeable — if anything.

FRANCIS

Ah? Well, I want to see some one two or three doors up the street and I think I will step in there till Eleanor returns.

NED

Oh, Eleanor!

MRS. WADE

[*Going out with* FRANCIS.] By the way, Francis —

FRANCIS

[*Turning at door.*] And Father Nelson, you might try your hand at making an impression.

[*Exeunt* MRS. WADE *and* FRANCIS.]

NED

Want to try, Father?

FATHER NELSON

No.— I like you.

NED

Why?

FATHER NELSON

Because you are honest, in spite of all your pretence of being so.

NED

Sounds complicated.

FATHER NELSON

You love your cousin, Miss Wade. It would cost you nothing to be a Catholic — as far as might be necessary. You know it would please her. And she urges you — and pleads with you — and there is everything to induce you — and you won't. I like that.

NED

Really?

FATHER NELSON

There's another thing. You love Miss Wade — very much — although some might not think it to look at you. You do all you can — which, to be

sure, is not a great deal — to prevent Mr. Hardinge's conversion. I know people who would say your motive was jealousy, since his conversion would ensure Miss Wade's accepting him. I understand you better. If she wants him, you want her to have him. But you oppose his conversion, because you think it a bad thing in itself. Yes, I like you.

NED

Well, Father, you do want to make an impression of some kind, don't you?

FATHER NELSON

It is my business to understand people.

NED

A charming business. Only a priest — or a reporter — could be so impertinent. I have always said interviewing was the modern, Protestant substitute for the confessional.— So you think I love my cousin, Miss Wade?

FATHER NELSON

I know it.

NED

Well, in the way of business — your business — I don't mind admitting that I do. But she doesn't know it — do you think?

FATHER NELSON

Oh, no, she doesn't know it.

NED

Just so. She couldn't conceive of my doing anything so foolish, though she knows I do more foolish things every day. [*Continues dreamily, half, as it were, to himself.*] Oh, yes, I love her. Loved her as a child, though I hardly knew it myself. She has been the sweetest dream figure in my dream world. One day stands out so clearly in my memory, father — a day in Hadrian's Villa, an autumn day, such sunlight. Cousin Florence was tired, and we rambled by ourselves, and chatted, and sang. That day, that day — I almost told her I loved her. But I was marvellous wise — for a fool. I knew if I told her, it would be all over. She could never love me. She could ramble with me, and pick flowers, and hear birdsong. But love me — no.

FATHER NELSON

Yet —

NED

Yet you think I'm lovable. But I'm not — not in her way.— I don't believe in cousins' marrying — even second cousins, do you?

FATHER NELSON

It depends.

NED

On whether the lady wishes it. Yes, of course. But marriage is folly anyway. It spoils love. I've seen it so often in my limited experience. You must have seen it millions of times. Love and housekeeping — it's impossible.

FATHER NELSON

Then you don't wish to marry the young lady, after all?

NED

Offer her to me — oh, offer her, and see. These are consolation arguments. You've met them before. But she doesn't know I love her. And wouldn't care if she did. Oh, yes she would, because there is a divine pity about her. And I shall tell her some day, just to have her pity me. And then she won't believe it, won't believe I can take anything seriously. Yet she'll pity me. And it will be delicious. As for this Francis Hardinge —

FATHER NELSON

Well?

NED

Is it well? Of course he will end a Catholic. Or

he won't. Who can say? But in any case his conscience will be more to him than even she. He is born religious. I don't understand that. I don't want the bondage of conscience — or the bondage of religion — sometimes not even the bondage of love. I want to be free — free as a cloud, which, by the way, I suppose is not free at all. How is that? But you don't know. You're a priest and modern science is nothing to you. You're not modern, you're just universal, yesterday, today, and for ever, learn nothing, forget nothing — like the Bourbons.

FATHER NELSON

You're impertinent now.

NED

But you enjoy it. That's why I love these Catholic priests — I've seen so many of late years. They're men of the world — not like the Puritan parsons, who may live in another world, I'm by no means sure it's a better. You Catholics have such a vast grasp of human nature. You know what the sweet of life is. Some of you — Father Nelson, for instance,— could say with Calchas in *La Belle Hélène*, "If I had followed my vocation, I should have lived a life of pleasure"—

FATHER NELSON

How dare you?

NED

Oh, I dare anything. Now this Hardinge — let him try his best, he could never feel what a life of pleasure is. And Eleanor — she might, she knows a jest, but she loathes it. You remember how she looks sometimes, when she hears one. It's adorable.

[*Enter* ELEANOR — *twenty years old — rather tall — dark brown hair, dark blue eyes — features delicately cut, passionate, sensitive, earnest, capable of sudden glory — rather slow than quick in movement, with slow, subtle gesture.*]

NED

Isn't it, Eleanor?

ELEANOR

[*Shakes hands and greets both of them.*] Isn't what?

NED

Father Nelson says that the way you look when you hear a joke that strikes you as inappropriate is adorable.

FATHER NELSON

Of course, you know I —

NED

Well, never mind that. I'm going now. But you just missed Francis, Eleanor — and it was most unfortunate — the chance of your life, in fact. You see, his disposition was perfect. He had been holding forth to your mother and the Father here on the beauties of the monastic vocation. It was inspiring to listen to him. At least, so I'm told. You would have thought he fully expected to end up in that way, whenever he was good enough. Oh, if you had been ready to strike when the iron was hot! — Now he's gone across the street to some Unitarians. I can hear the iron zip when it strikes them. He's coming back, but he'll be all changed.

ELEANOR

What is this about, Father Nelson? Has Francis really been here?

NED

You doubt my word? I'm going.

FATHER NELSON

He has been here, Miss Wade. And he said interesting things to us. I know nothing about the Unitarians across the street.

NED

Of course not. How should you?

FATHER NELSON

This young man said interesting things, too. And I told him I liked him — because he refused to be converted.

NED

Go on.

FATHER NELSON

That's for you.

ELEANOR

You are both so odd this afternoon. Is Francis really coming back?

NED

[*To* Father Nelson.] You see. Always Francis. Why should I be converted? [*To* Eleanor.] Oh, yes, he's coming back shortly. [*To* Father Nelson.] Yet you'd think me the better material of the two, softer, wouldn't you? But my conscience — my conscience — it allows me all the annoyance of belief and none of its comforts. I should like to be like Eleanor — with those earnest, earnest eyes, always looking for strange things, until she thinks she sees them. I should like to — and then I shouldn't. Good-bye, Eleanor. I'll tell you what it's all about some day. [*Exit.*]

ELEANOR

He's a singular creature, isn't he?

FATHER NELSON

A very lovable creature, I think.

ELEANOR

Oh, yes. Father, I'm so glad you're here.

FATHER NELSON

Well?

ELEANOR

You know what is going on. We've talked about it before. But it must be settled now. Francis loves me, he — wishes to marry me. I've hesitated — and kept him waiting — I can't any longer. What answer shall I give him?

FATHER NELSON

What answer do you wish to give him?

ELEANOR

You know.

FATHER NELSON

Then give it.

ELEANOR

[*After a pause.*] But the future?

FATHER NELSON

The future is in the hands of God. Of course, I understand what you mean, my child. Your heart

is divided between him and your religion. I think I know what your religion is to you. I think you know what our religion is to me. Yet I say to you, marry this man freely and fearlessly. I hope, I believe you will have no reason to regret it. Now if it were your cousin —

ELEANOR

Ned?

FATHER NELSON

Ned. Oh, he is well worth marrying. He is gentle and tender and kindly and devoted and would fill any woman's life full of sunshine.

ELEANOR

Ned — oh, yes.

FATHER NELSON

But he will never know what religion means — as you and I know. Mr. Hardinge —

ELEANOR

Francis — you do believe it — you do know it. Don't you? I have prayed so, morning and night, and in the night, when all the world was quiet — prayed to have him see and feel things as I see and feel them. He can — oh, he can.

FATHER NELSON

I know it. I have watched him carefully. It is a noble nature — frank, sincere, earnest, mightily loving. Even if he should continue to disagree with you, he would be broad and tolerant and patient. But I believe that your prayers will be answered. I can see that it is the very depth of his heart and its earnestness that make him delay committing himself. He will not give himself to God because he knows that if he gives himself at all, he must give himself wholly.

ELEANOR

As I have done.

FATHER NELSON

As you have done. But if he does give himself, it will be a gift worth having, a rich gift, a precious gift.

ELEANOR

Yes, a precious gift.

FATHER NELSON

He has that in him which might indeed enrich the world, a wealth of service, a power of service, which I think as yet you hardly understand.

ELEANOR

I not understand! Oh!

FATHER NELSON

I have dreamed sometimes of what he might do for the Church, if he were heartily enlisted in her cause. The chance of such a thing is more than enough to justify you in giving the answer you desire to give.

ELEANOR

Ah, Father, you won't call me selfish. Or am I selfish, if I think of myself before I think of the Church? I know his service would be great and splendid, his usefulness beyond my or even your dreams. His heart is so large, and his head so clear, and his arm so strong. But it isn't the usefulness I think of first. It is he and I living together, loving together, loving God together. Am I selfish?

FATHER NELSON

No, my child. You are listening to a deep, true, human instinct, the mightiest, the finest of *human* instincts.

ELEANOR

[*With more and more passionate enthusiasm.*] There is a barrier between us now. I can touch his hand over it. I can hear his lightest whisper through it. But still — the barrier — the icy barrier. Oh, if the love of God would melt it and sweep it away! That there might be no veil, no reservation between

us — nothing but an absolute union of love in that greater love. Father, Father, will the barrier be swept away?

FATHER NELSON

Everything bids us hope it, look for it.

ELEANOR

And shall I say yes to him now — barrier or no barrier?

FATHER NELSON

It is your right — and I am ready to add, your duty. In doing it, you can hardly do wrong for yourself, and you may do a great service to what you cherish most in the world. I feel more enthusiasm for this marriage than if you were to be united to one already of your own faith. Nothing that I have seen of Mr. Hardinge —

[*Enter* Mrs. Wade.]

MRS. WADE

Oh, you have come, Eleanor. Francis will be back in a few moments. He went out to do an errand, while he was waiting for you. This matter must be settled, Father — soon.

ELEANOR

He has been advising me, mamma — to do what I

wish. And yet — somehow — I am afraid — the barrier.

FATHER NELSON

You don't trust enough. I have been telling her — she doesn't trust enough. I have watched Mr. Hardinge, and I believe in him. Such men as he are made to do good. And how can he do more good than by having his eyes opened through union with her?

MRS. WADE

How, indeed?

FATHER NELSON

She doesn't trust enough — nor hope enough. I have said all I can — and I must go. Speak to her, Mrs. Wade. Tell her to trust him and trust herself. The day when I am called upon to bless that betrothal will be one of the happiest of my life.

[*Exit.*]

MRS. WADE

Your mind is made up then?

ELEANOR

Oh, mamma, I don't know. There is the barrier. You would like it? I know you would.

MRS. WADE

Very much.

ELEANOR

You all tempt me so. And you love the Church.

MRS. WADE

How I love it! And I wouldn't have you do anything really to draw you away from it.

ELEANOR

Oh, no, no!

MRS. WADE

But I love you too, dear. You are all I have. I want your happiness. That is one reason why I wished to come back to America, as I have said to you before. I could not bear the thought of your marrying over there.

ELEANOR

I am glad you came back to America.

MRS. WADE

You will think me foolish, but the Hardinges are such good old New England stock, like our own. When you are young, you don't care for these things. You will, when you get older. It means something to know what your children's grandparents were, and their grandparents before them.

ELEANOR

Yes, but you appreciate what my religion — our

religion — is to me. Can I live so close to any one who doesn't call it his religion?

MRS. WADE

But we hope that he will call it his religion, dear. It is not impossible. It is even very probable. If ever a man had the religious temperament, it is Francis Hardinge. And when a man has that temperament, his intellect will not always stand in his way. Now Ned —

ELEANOR

Why do you bring in Ned — and Father Nelson too?

MRS. WADE

Because Ned loves you.

ELEANOR

Ned? Nonsense. You've hinted something of the sort before. But it's absurd. Ned couldn't love.

MRS. WADE

Every man can love — once. And you are his once. But what you mean is that he hasn't Francis's temperament. Ned might love you, but he couldn't love your religion. That is true. Ned is airy, joyous, content with trifles, to play all day with motes in sunshine. Francis is bent on finding out

what life means. There is but one answer to that question — we know.

ELEANOR

But if he shouldn't find that answer?

MRS. WADE

[*Slowly.*] Even if he shouldn't find it — how could you have a better husband, one who would be more devoted or more tolerant? He would simply be of no religion, which would be far better for you than if he were an active Protestant. You would be no worse off than many, many Catholic wives, better than many. They have to take their husbands as they are — fortunate enough when they are such as yours would be.

ELEANOR

But it seems as if I could never endure that.

MRS. WADE

I am inclined to think you could endure it very well. But we hope for something else. It all rests with you, my dear. A woman can do anything with her husband, if she goes about it rightly. You will go about it rightly.

ELEANOR

Ah!

MRS. WADE

And with the immense advantage of Francis's temperament, you must win. I hardly need tell you how. No argument, no discussion, no allusion, even. Never seem unhappy because he does not agree with you, or reproachful. Never let your religious duties interfere with his pleasures.

ELEANOR

But would you have me deceitful with him?

MRS. WADE

No. It isn't necessary. Adapt yourself. The first principle of all religion is love, not nagging, or torment. You need not sacrifice anything essential. Just think of him before you think of yourself. Let him feel that your religion is beautiful, let him feel its charm, its joy, its help, its power. Never let him feel it as a burden or a bugbear, to you, or to him. Insensibly, gradually he will long to share it with you.

ELEANOR

[*After a pause.*] Oh, mamma, I want him.

MRS. WADE

Of course you do. And he wants you. And it is God's will that you should have him. Take him.

ELEANOR

You must think me very foolish, very irresolute —

[*Enter* FRANCIS.]

MRS. WADE

Ah, here is Francis now. [*He shakes hands with* ELEANOR *and they murmur each a word of greeting.*] You were some time about your errand.

FRANCIS

Yes. People talk and talk — and expect one to listen. It was the Warrington's. They happened to be having a bridge party, though I knew nothing of it. It was deliriously gay — or intended to be so. And the hats — a forest of hats — at one moment I seemed to see nothing but hats — white plumes, and yellow, sky blue, blood red — it dazzled me. And the light all coming from above so, you had to peer to find faces. Only laughter and chatter seemed to circulate under the hats — like a brook through a bunch of shrubbery. And do they like it, I wonder? Or is it only better than staying with their own society at home?

MRS. WADE

They like to see each other's hats.

FRANCIS

I doubt it. They like to see hats not quite equal to their own. But unfortunately, they're accustomed to their own. So the others all appear better. It strikes me as unprofitable.

MRS. WADE

You must allow something for the frivolity of human nature.

FRANCIS

I don't.

MRS. WADE

No. I know you don't. But it would be a too earnest world, if everybody took life as seriously as you. And now, my dears, I'm going.

ELEANOR

But, mamma.

MRS. WADE

But, Eleanor, I am. And you both understand what my wishes are.

[*She goes out.* FRANCIS *comes over to sofa, sits down by* ELEANOR, *and takes her hand.*]

FRANCIS

Have you nothing to say to me?

ELEANOR

I don't know. I don't know. They all urge me to do what — what I wish to do. Mamma urges me. Father Nelson urges me. They say that it must all come out right, that in time you will come to think as I do. But I must not assume that. Must I?

FRANCIS

[*Slowly.*] No, you must not assume that. We must not start on any false basis, not with any false hopes. Must we, Eleanor?

ELEANOR

No, oh, no.

FRANCIS

I might make believe, as some men would. I might let you imagine now that there were hopes — and blast them. Or I might conform outwardly for peace's sake, go to church with you, and listen to your prayers, and keep silent. You would not wish that, would you?

ELEANOR

No, oh, no.

FRANCIS

I say I might, but I couldn't. Because I love you. I love you so. It is no whim, no boy's fancy, no mere physical attraction. In these months that

we have seen each other, and talked of great things, the roots of my life have grown into yours, twined, tangled together, inextricably. You *are* my life. I couldn't profane such a love as that by any hypocrisy, any falsehood, any pretence. Could I?

ELEANOR

No, oh, no. Nothing to profane our love, nothing to mar it, nothing to degrade it. That would be the worst of all.

FRANCIS

And, Eleanor, you are sure that I would never trouble your belief, never mock, never sneer, never insinuate, never join with those who do not understand, and make you feel desolate, alone, deserted?

ELEANOR

I know. I know.

FRANCIS

And — your children. I have told you before that you should have your own way with them. It is not as if I had an eager, opposite belief to teach or preach. All belief is lovely to me — at least, any such as you could accept. I would not promise that there would be no influence from me. How can one help one's influence? But I do promise that everything should be sincere, frank, loyal. How could it

be otherwise between me and you? For I do love you. How I love you!

ELEANOR

I do know how you love me. I feel it. I understand it — because I love you. And your love is so great — so beautiful. It bewilders me — I am not worthy of it. And with such love there can be only honour, and loyalty, and sincerity. But — Francis, I love God. Those two loves fill my life. They would more, far more, than fill any life. If I could only make you feel that love of God, as I do. It does not seem as if it could be more beautiful than our love. But it is perfect, where ours is imperfect; divine, where ours is human. I can't separate the two, can't think of one without the other. You don't ask me to separate them, do you?

FRANCIS

I don't ask you to. I don't wish you to. I feel the beauty of the other love. I know the rapture of it. Only — but never mind that now. I would do everything I can to augment it for you, rather than decrease it. Never, never, believe that I will be its enemy in any way. [*Pause — he has held her hand all the time. Now he puts his arm about her and looks into her eyes, which meet his.*] Eleanor, we

know each other. We know how we stand to each other. We know each other's love. Will you take me — as I am — for better, for worse — for ever? Will you trust me?

ELEANOR

[*Looking at him with all her soul, softly, slowly.*] I trust you.

CURTAIN

ACT II

[*Same scene — three months later — afternoon of January twenty-eighth* — ELEANOR *waiting, dressed to go out* — FATHER NELSON *introduced.*]

ELEANOR

[*Greeting him warmly.*] Oh, Father! I am glad you found me. You see I am just going out.

FATHER NELSON

I was fortunate.

ELEANOR

Yes. Mr. Hardinge is coming for me. We are to go together to call on the Durhams.

FATHER NELSON

Durhams?

ELEANOR

Cousins of Francis's, who have just returned from Europe. I have never seen them. I want to.

FATHER NELSON

Unitarians, I suppose.

ELEANOR

I imagine so. Most of Francis's relatives are — or Episcopalians. And the Unitarians are more friendly to me.

FATHER NELSON

Just so. Only they patronize you, don't they?

ELEANOR

I don't mind it. And they all think so much of Francis — as they ought. But I am beginning to realize what a struggle it will mean for him, if he comes — to us. Mamma and I were almost alone in the world. But Francis — Francis will have hosts of cousins and uncles and old friends to fight against.

FATHER NELSON

I don't worry about the uncles and cousins. If he makes up his mind, he will care no more for them than for his dead great grandmother. Not so much.

ELEANOR

How well you understand him — as I do!

FATHER NELSON

You hear from him, of course, in spite of his being busy — and in Washington.

ELEANOR

Of course, every day — though he is busy.

FATHER NELSON

And does he write anything — encouraging?

ELEANOR

He writes about — other things — mostly. But a word or two — has made me hopeful.

FATHER NELSON

So am I — hopeful. Does he speak of Father White?

ELEANOR

He has spoken of him. Oh, Father, are you really hopeful? Do you know, I have thought perhaps this journey to Washington —? Oh, what it would mean to me!

FATHER NELSON

I have thought so too — that there may have been something else besides business, that he wanted to get away, alone by himself, and think it over, and think it out. I hope a great deal from Father White. I hoped a great deal when I introduced him to Francis here, two months ago. His experience has been like Francis's. He, too, was a New England Unitarian, nominally, really believing nothing.

ELEANOR

Francis is an Episcopalian, nominally.

FATHER NELSON

Ah? Well, what difference? And Father White had studied all the systems and read all the philosophies. He did not sneer, because he was too thoughtful, and too kindly. But he had no belief — none. Then, one day, he said to himself that the world must be saved. What was the use of doubting and discussing and denying in all this misery? The misery could not be denied. Christ had given his life to relieve it — even a little. He would give his life to relieve it — even much, much less. And he came to our church, because it does not doubt, or dispute, or discuss, but works. And he is working — with every ounce of one of the noblest souls that ever was. And Francis is like him. If any one can influence Francis, by persuasion and still more by example, he can.

ELEANOR

How I pray for it!

FATHER NELSON

But, my child, we must not be impatient. These things come best, when they come slowly. In a deep mind, like Francis's, we must not look for a sud-

den, shallow tempest. The change must begin from the bottom and work outward to the whole man.

ELEANOR

I am not impatient. I will not be. And then — oh, Father, ought I to be ashamed of it? I cannot be. To have Francis, and have him feeling as I do, would be heaven. But, I am so near heaven, as it is. This earthly, human love is so beautiful. It seems, it seems almost — enough. That is wicked, isn't it?

FATHER NELSON

No, my child, it is not wicked. The human love, the right, the best human love is so near akin to the divine, that the two blend together, and in its first glory the human almost eclipses the other, and God wills it so.

ELEANOR

You are too good to me. But I do believe our love is the best human love. With him, how could it be otherwise? He is so noble, so large, so generous, and he always thinks of me first. He would give anything for me — his life without an instant's hesitation — anything but his duty. I would not have him give that.

FATHER NELSON

There is nothing in your love or his to be ashamed of.

ELEANOR

I hope not. And so, you see, while I pray for his conversion day and night, I can't help feeling that I am too, too happy to have him as he is. And you do not think me wrong?

FATHER NELSON

No, no. Certainly not wrong. It is better you should feel so — better for you, better for him. Pray. But do not fret him, do not pester him, do not remind him even of your wishes. He knows them well enough. He would give his heart's blood to satisfy them. But his duty, what he feels to be his duty, he cannot give.

ELEANOR

No. No.

FATHER NELSON

That is why the gift of himself, when he sees the light and does give it, will be so worthy and so beautiful. And he will see the light. A nature so fine, so noble, so richly endowed, is not so richly endowed for nothing. Meanwhile, it is for you to enjoy his

love, without repining or questioning, to get the full beauty of it, leaving the rest to God.

[*Enter* NED.]

ELEANOR

Ah, here is Ned.

NED

Yes, here I am. How do, Father?

FATHER NELSON

I am always glad to see you, Mr. Wilde.

NED

And do you know why I am here?

ELEANOR

I cannot imagine, unless —

NED

No, not because I was dying to see you. I'm always that. I want to know about that convert of yours.

ELEANOR

Convert?

NED

Oh, don't pretend ignorance. I know your wiles, your snares by day, and your pitfalls by night.

And the Father, with his jovial good-nature, working, working, always working.

FATHER NELSON

Really —

NED

Yes, really. Do you see this? A letter from Washington — all about Mr. Francis Hardinge.

FATHER NELSON

All?

NED

Well, all that's important. Oh, yes, he's in Washington about business, I know. He's been there a month, and I think he's been busy about his soul.

FATHER NELSON

He couldn't be better occupied, could he?

NED

Ah, I don't say as to that. Hear my letter. "Hardinge is with the priests night and day. There's a certain Father White, lean and pale, with eyes burning out of him. He was a Unitarian once. Now he is the fiercest worker the church has. And Hardinge is with him always. What does it mean?" You and I know what it means. But my correspondent doesn't. He goes on. "Of course, there's

nothing in it. I did hear that Hardinge was engaged to a Catholic girl. But a man of his intelligence — oh, no, it's quite impossible. I suppose he's curious. He always was curious. But curiosity leads a fellow into strange places." You see, " leads a fellow into strange places." And Hardinge always was curious. And so intelligent. It doesn't seem possible, does it? I fancy he will probe this Father — White to the bottom and then end just where he was.

ELEANOR

But why are you so desperately opposed to Francis's — new view of things?

NED

Why, why? Because I'm intelligent, too. And I can't bear to see his splendid intelligence degraded. Oh, no. It's impossible, impossible.

FATHER NELSON

Impossible?

NED

I say impossible — I wish it were.— Why, isn't he by nature a typical Puritan, a man who lives by his intelligence and wants to die by it, and go to perdition by it, if necessary? Does God mean anything to him but intelligence?

FATHER NELSON

Perhaps he is intelligent enough to see that intelligence is a poor thing.

NED

[*Walking up and down, stops straight in front of* FATHER NELSON *and stares at him.*] You're intelligent, too, aren't you? And you understand that really intelligence has nothing to do with it. Intelligence was given us so that we might prove it our duty to gratify our passions and the most intelligent are the keenest to see their duty in anything they want. Therefore, if Francis wishes to gratify his wife, his intelligence will show him how. Am I right?

FATHER NELSON

I trust so.

NED

And I resist her and you, not because I am intelligent, but because I am wicked.

[FATHER NELSON *nods good-humouredly.*]

NED

Now that is perfect. If it weren't for my wicked will, I should be a Catholic too.

FATHER NELSON

I am sure of it.

NED

But I won't, I won't, I won't.

FATHER NELSON

Sounds to me like a wicked will — on the point of breaking. I am sorry to leave you, when your disposition is so favourable. Good-bye, Miss Wade. I hope you will have good news from Washington.

ELEANOR

Must you go?

FATHER NELSON

I have other wills to break. I think I may leave this one to you. Break it. [*Gesture.*] [*Exit.*]

NED

A hearty man, the Father. He ought to be Pope.

ELEANOR

He is good enough.

NED

Just so. And it's all settled about Francis.

ELEANOR

What's settled?

NED

His conversion, of course.

ELEANOR

News to me.

NED

Doesn't he write you? Not about Father White?

ELEANOR

Oh, sometimes about Father White.

NED

Then it's more serious than I thought. If he wrote you about his conversion, there might be nothing in it.

ELEANOR

You reason profoundly.

NED

I can — if it weren't for my wicked will. Can't you imagine Francis a convert? No fine weather, holiday, white tie and Prince Albert religion for him. It will take him all over. His eyes will burn out of his head, like this Father White's, as my correspondent mentions. His religion won't be like your religion, a fur cloak to wrap him round, a large, sleepy pillow, to dream away on, a great, sweet bath of roses to shut out the noisome odours of the world. His religion —

ELEANOR

How well you understand religion.

NED

If it weren't for my wicked will. His religion will be stern and sharp and hard. It will cut and bruise and trample — him — you, if you get in the way of it.

ELEANOR

I shall like that.

NED

Like it? You think you will.

ELEANOR

I know I shall.

NED

H'm. Anything that's Francis's, I suppose.

ELEANOR

Anything that's Francis's.

NED

[*After a turn or two about the room,* ELEANOR *watching him, amused.*] You like to live in a turmoil, don't you? Strained, tortured, twisted? Things doing all the time? Don't care for repose?

ELEANOR

Repose isn't life.

NED

It is. I would have proved it to you, if you had married me.

ELEANOR

Do you know, I don't associate repose and you.

NED

No. That's because my muscles move. But my heart rests. With your sort of people the muscles rest and the heart is always in a great storm. If you had married me —

ELEANOR

But I wasn't asked.

NED

Asked? Didn't my eyes ask you? Didn't my hands ask you? Didn't my feet ask you — a thousand times?

ELEANOR

Really these proposals with the feet —

NED

Oh, you think I'm joking. I'm glad, because otherwise I couldn't talk seriously to you. It wouldn't be decent.

ELEANOR

I'm not sure that it is anyway.

NED

Nonsense! Francis might hear me. But I have loved you, Eleanor, loved you. Do you remember one day when we climbed the high slopes in the Rhone valley, and the mist came down, and we were shut off alone there, with the torrent roaring below and the pleasant possibility of speedy extinction? And you were frightened. Oh, you hardly showed it, just a bit less colour, and a cold hand. And I had a sense of protecting you. Fancy! Me protecting you. Then the sun drove the mist away. And you picked a gentian and gave it to me. I have it still.

ELEANOR

Ned! What sort of talk is this?

NED

Just to show you that you might have married me.

ELEANOR

Nonsense!

NED

Nonsense — of course. I know you never would have married me. Otherwise I shouldn't have mentioned the matter. But if you had, you would have

had long days of peace, long pleasant days, one like another, with sunshine all over them. Your religion would have been just a golden dream from which I should never have awakened you. Now you will not know peace, nor quiet, nor golden days. His religion won't let you.

ELEANOR

But I don't think I want peace or quiet. This isn't a world for peace. We must act, even suffer a little, to live.

NED

Ah, but we can't suffer a little, as we please — for zest. Don't wish for suffering, whatever you do, or it will come upon you in torrents, in avalanches, till you gasp, and stagger, and cry for mercy, perhaps in vain.

ELEANOR

How you talk this afternoon! What madness has possessed you?

NED

I've told you the name of it.

[*Enter* Mr. Hardinge.]

NED

[*Begins abruptly, no chance for any greetings.*]

Well, what do you think about it?

MR. HARDINGE

Think about what? How do you do, my dear? [*Kisses* ELEANOR.]

NED

About your son's and my friend's and her lover's doings in Washington?

MR. HARDINGE

If he is all those things, he ought to be doing something, oughtn't he?

NED

In other words, you think he is your son and her lover, but it's none of my business.

MR. HARDINGE

I didn't say so.

NED

And I don't mind if you think so, because he *is* my friend and friends are made to meddle in each other's affairs. [*All this very light and without any hint of serious friction.*]

ELEANOR

Ned, Mr. Hardinge may not quite understand your —

NED

Oddities? He likes them.

MR. HARDINGE

Yes, my dear, I like them. Don't worry. And what is Francis doing?

NED

Getting converted. Isn't he, Eleanor?

ELEANOR

I don't know.

MR. HARDINGE

But he might have done that here.

NED

He might. But you see the point is this. Here he would have been converted *by* his inclination. There he's being converted *against* it.

MR. HARDINGE

I see.

NED

[*Pointing to* ELEANOR.] She's his inclination.

MR. HARDINGE

Wouldn't she be any one's?

NED

I don't deny it. But persons of his temper try hard to fight against their inclinations. Isn't it ridiculous? I study mine. It's so lovely to have a

temptation — and feel it growing, growing, and feel one's conscience melting in it. [*To* ELEANOR, *suddenly.*] You don't have that feeling.

ELEANOR

I suppose we all —

NED

You don't have that feeling. But Mr. Hardinge has it. And as one gets older, one's conscience dries and doesn't melt so easily, and the temptations grow sadly fewer. And the idea of any one's fighting against them!

MR. HARDINGE

But Washington?

NED

Oh, yes, Washington, and her lover. You see, there's a certain Father White, who could never be any one's inclination.

ELEANOR

You don't know him.

NED

Yes, I do. His eyes burn, says my correspondent. And this Father White has got hold of Francis, and Francis is very curious, my correspondent says. You can see what must happen.

MR. HARDINGE

[*To* ELEANOR.] You've heard nothing definite?

ELEANOR

Nothing whatever.

MR. HARDINGE

I've always seen what would happen, though not when or how. Francis has much of his mother in him, and his mother's eyes burned. And he will fight his inclinations. So far Mr. Wilde is right. He is one of the kind to fight his inclinations like wild beasts, just because they are his inclinations. I should never be surprised at anything he does, nor at anything any one does, for that matter. But certainly at nothing Francis does. He will overturn the world to satisfy his sense of duty, not to speak of small mites that inhabit the world.

ELEANOR

But isn't that fine of him?

MR. HARDINGE

I suppose it is.

NED

Mr. Hardinge and I should understand each other. He *supposes* it is.

MR. HARDINGE

I only hope his fierce sense of duty will turn just the way you wish it to.

ELEANOR

I hope it will. And I believe it.

[*Enter* MRS. WADE — *shakes hands with* MR. HARDINGE *and* NED.]

MR. HARDINGE

I hear that Francis is doing great things in Washington.

MRS. WADE

Ah? Law?

MR. HARDINGE

No. Prophets.

MRS. WADE

Who told you? A letter, Eleanor?

ELEANOR

Not mine.

NED

Mine.

MRS. WADE

He wrote *you* that he was busy with the prophets?

NED

Not Francis. A friend. That Francis was busy — with prophet White — of the burning eyes.

MRS. WADE

Oh, Father White. I'm so glad.

NED

We all are.

MR. HARDINGE

Yet, for all I've said, when it comes down to the point I can't believe it. Three hundred and fifty years ago Francis's ancestors were burned by Father White's — spiritual ancestors. Three hundred years ago Francis's ancestors, in steeple crowned hats and flat bands starched stiff with cold gravity, came over here to get away from Father White's spiritual ancestors and condemned him to the devil with all his works. I seem to see one of them standing on Plymouth Rock now and preaching a three hour sermon at Francis, upbraiding him with throwing away the liberty of thought they suffered for. Yet he throws it away.

NED

His inclination, you remember, liberty of thought is nothing but his inclination. You wouldn't have him damned for following his inclination.

MRS. WADE

His inclination?

NED

Just a little joke between Mr. Hardinge and me.

MRS. WADE

I am too dull to grasp all this but I suppose it means that — that Francis's eyes are opening.

MR. HARDINGE

Or shutting.

NED

Or burning.

MRS. WADE

Yet I can't quite believe it. Those steeple-hatted ancestors — they were a cold race. Some of them were mine, to be sure. But I am a woman. Now Francis —

MR. HARDINGE

Is not a woman. That's true. But in some respects he is like one — as I am. And your religion has such a charm, when one's eyes are shut. I've felt it in the Cathedrals, in long summer twilights, with the broken gleam shimmering on old shrines, and the organ playing with vast, dim enchantment. I've felt it, and felt my eyes shutting, shutting; but with

the daylight they opened again. Old beauty isn't quite all, you know.

ELEANOR

[*Passionately.*] Old beauty isn't anything — or is only the garment, which might altogether fall away. It isn't the old beauty, it is the new truth, the old truth, the eternal truth, and the love, which is neither old nor new. If Francis doesn't come to us for these, I don't want him to come for any beauty, I don't want him to come at all.

MR. HARDINGE

[*With singular tenderness.*] You are quite right, my dear. But I am older than you and Francis and more in the shadow of those steeple crowns. If we want to find the Durhams, perhaps —

ELEANOR

Ah, yes, of course. We must go at once.

MR. HARDINGE

Good-bye, Mr. Wilde. Mrs. Wade — I don't think I congratulated you, but I will. Good-bye.

[*Exit with* ELEANOR.]

MRS. WADE

And now, Ned, what is all this about a letter, and Francis, and Father White?

NED

Nothing.

MRS. WADE

I thought so.

NED

That is, nothing to me. A friend writes me that Francis haunts the Catholics day and night.

MRS. WADE

But will anything come of it?

NED

Anything may come of it. Have you a volcanic temperament?

MRS. WADE

I may have had once.

NED

I doubt it. Eleanor must have got it from her father. I don't think Francis got it from his. It must be an unpleasant thing.

MRS. WADE

I don't know.

NED

I do. To live along quietly and then feel one of these upheavals, subterranean disturbances, a sudden impulse to make yourself and every one else un-

comfortable, and turn the world over, a sort of spiritual seasickness. I wonder Eleanor can like it.

MRS. WADE

She appears to.

NED

She does. It's strange. I was just expostulating with her. I told her how peacefully she might have lived with me. I even told her I loved her. She seemed surprised.

MRS. WADE

I don't wonder.

NED

Are you surprised? Don't you believe it?

MRS. WADE

No.

NED

It's true, all the same. I'm not volcanic, but I love Eleanor. To be with her is to me just like lying beside a brook, on a summer afternoon, with my hat over my eyes, half asleep, half awake, full of the most delicious dreams. Now nobody else makes me feel like that. I could lie there forever.

MRS. WADE

If it weren't for Francis, perhaps you might.

NED

Never. Even if Francis were out of the way, she would long for him — more, or some one like him. She wants to be a roaring torrent to Francis. She would never be contented to be a brook to me. But isn't it odd that I should love a roaring torrent — and make a brook of it?

MRS. WADE

Too odd. I don't believe you.

NED

I knew *she* wouldn't. That's why I told her.

[*Enter* FRANCIS.]

MRS. WADE

Francis! [*Kisses him affectionately.*]

FRANCIS

Just so. Here I am.

NED

[*Shaking hands.*] But why?

FRANCIS

But why not?

NED

And converted?

FRANCIS

You are rather impertinent.

MRS. WADE

Isn't he? He has been reading us letters from friends in Washington about you and Father White.

NED

Of the burning eyes.

FRANCIS

They haven't burned me. Where's Eleanor?

MRS. WADE

Just gone out with your father — to call on the Durhams. They won't be gone long. But, Francis, tell me —

FRANCIS

What?

MRS. WADE

Nothing. I'll go and telephone to Eleanor. That will be the best way. She would never forgive me, if you were here and I didn't let her know. Don't tell *him* anything. [*Exit.*]

FRANCIS

I won't.

NED

You needn't. I'll tell you — the whole story.— Well, you're on your guard. This love business, so charming, but mustn't affect our intelligence, oh, no, not our intelligence.

FRANCIS

What do you know about intelligence?

NED

A lot — about other people's. That is the only way I use mine. So we go to Washington — and we find Father White — burning — all up. And we would so like to burn up too. And this must be our intelligence, because we have left our passions behind in Boston.

FRANCIS

You know about other people's passions, also?

NED

Don't I? By my own. And Father White tells us that the world must be saved, and we agree with him entirely that it needs it, but how? And he says, try, try, try. [FRANCIS *listens with less irony and more and more interest, as* NED *continues.*] Here is the greatest machinery ever invented, he says. What if it creaks, what if a chain breaks occasionally, or

something goes wrong? The greatest machinery ever invented for helping the world — and the world needs helping so much. Won't you try? And we listen — always with our cold intelligence, our passions being in Boston. And the world seems to need helping so much. And the machine is such a great, splendid machine, and so beautiful, so august. Only it needs men. And we might do a little, a very little, but something. The splendour grows on us. And the need grows. Why not? Why not? And then we wonder how we could for a moment have thought of anything else. And it seems that our lives were made for just that one service —. So you see you needn't tell me anything.

FRANCIS

[*Evidently impressed, but checks himself.*] You *are* rather intelligent, as well as impertinent, aren't you?

NED

Oh, very. And while this has been going on in Washington, I've been making love to your young woman here.

FRANCIS

Ah?

NED

Yes, ah. Doesn't it disturb you?

FRANCIS

Not in the least.

NED

You underrate my charms. Or perhaps you don't believe me.

FRANCIS

Both.

NED

But I have. I told her half an hour ago how much I loved her.

FRANCIS

Did *she* believe you?

NED

No. But I think I made an impression on her. I reminded her of certain things and I told her I still have a flower she gave me years ago.

FRANCIS

And have you?

NED

You're not intelligent enough to understand me at all. And you see I should give her everything. You can't.

FRANCIS

Ah?

NED

You can't give her your intelligence or your conscience, and what is there left of *you* when those are taken away? Now I should give her everything, even my soul, to play with, and rumple, and throw aside, if she wanted to. I admit, my soul is a poor thing beside yours; but you can't give her yours, you see. And with me I explained to her she would be peaceful, her life would flow on and on, like a summer brook. With you, with you — who can tell what may happen to her with you?

FRANCIS

But she said she liked the uncertainty, didn't she?

NED

She did. Did not wish to be a summer brook, wished to be a stream of lava, flowing out of a red-hot mountain, twisted, tormented, tortured,— and I think she will.

[*Enter* ELEANOR.]

NED

Here she comes — a kind of suggestion of being tortured about her now isn't there?

ELEANOR

[*As* FRANCIS *kisses her.*] Oh, you've come. Why didn't you telegraph?

FRANCIS

I thought you might like the surprise. It was a sudden decision.

NED

Of course it's time for me to go. But I sha'n't hurry.

FRANCIS

Don't.

NED

He's been telling me such wonderful things about Washington, Eleanor. He saw the President, shook hands with him, and quite a number of congressmen. And he saw Father White. You know Father White. Charming man, but subtle in his influence, subtle. He gauged Francis's intelligence — to a hair. It wasn't so very difficult. Then he twisted it this way, and twisted it that way, gave it a pull here, and a pat there, and presto — well, good-bye. I hope you won't miss me. And, Francis, don't torment and torture her more than you can help, even if she likes it.

[*Exit.*]

FRANCIS

[*Takes her in his arms, long, silent embrace, then leads her to sofa, sits down with arm around her — intense but restrained passion in all the speeches of both through this scene.*] There is nothing to separate us any longer, my darling.

ELEANOR

Oh, Francis, is it true?

FRANCIS

True — beyond speech.

ELEANOR

And it isn't — it isn't — just for love of me?

FRANCIS

It couldn't be for that. It is for love of God, Eleanor. How can I tell you all I have been through? I was afraid of my love. It was so immense. It seemed to sweep everything away irresistibly. That was why I left you. I wanted to think, wanted to understand what it was that held me back, what the worth of it was. And when I got away, there was the old cold spirit, doubting everything, questioning everything, mocking everything. Yet the doubt itself wasn't so much, it was the love of doubting. I hated to give up my will, my own

way. That is the thing that is really hard, always hard. The doubting was only an excuse.

ELEANOR

I know it — so well.

FRANCIS

Then gradually I forgot all about myself. And what swelled before me and grew till it seemed monstrous was the pity of the world. All these millions suffering and toiling with no hope, unless there was this hope. Nothing here worth living for.

ELEANOR

I don't see how people endure it.

FRANCIS

They don't endure it, they forget it, some in work, some in pleasure, some in laughter, some in a strange lethargy. I have never forgotten it.

ELEANOR

I know it. I have seen it in your eyes.

FRANCIS

It was always in my heart. I suppose it was in my eyes — for those who could see it. But I used to say to myself, just because the world needs God does not show that there is God. Ah, but it does, it

must. Unless we despair of everything, give up everything, annihilate everything, there must be God. Nothing counts but the effort to find him — for ourselves and others. And so the light came to me.

ELEANOR

[*Passionately.*] Ah!

FRANCIS

Not in a flash, not in a blinding glare; but a great slow tide, rising gradually, like the dawn over mountains, touching everything, filling everything, with its splendour, with its peace. It is no argument, no cold intellectual convention, just a feeling, just even a hope, if you like; but such a sweet hope, such a strong hope, such a calm hope. You understand, Eleanor.

ELEANOR

Oh, Francis, how I understand!

FRANCIS

And of course, this didn't necessarily mean your church. But I have never been drawn to any other. Doubtless God is in all of them. But yours is *the* Church. The others are fragments, broken, colourless. Protestantism, after all, is every man his own religion. And I want my religion to be that of others, all others.

ELEANOR

All, all. It is the truest of democracies, isn't it?

FRANCIS

I have never doubted that. I have known for long, yes, even before I met you, that if God ever came to me, he must come through the old Church. Who denies its errors? Who disputes its imperfections? It errs because it is supremely human. It endures because it is divine. But just now I don't think of all that. I think of God. Do you know, for years, I have hardly dared to name him, he seemed so far, so far away. But now he is in all my thoughts, day and night. He is all my thoughts. God and you. No longer separable, distinguishable. Eleanor, it is you who have brought me this peace.

ELEANOR

[*After a long pause, during which she has lain quiet, with her head on* FRANCIS's *shoulder, speaks slowly and softly, without looking up at him.*] I cannot tell you what I feel. I never dared expect this. I did hope that after years you would come gradually to see the light, as I see it, that perhaps it would be a sober, wise harmony of wider thought and riper judgment. I hoped, I knew that my prayers would be answered some day.

FRANCIS

They have been answered — more than answered.

ELEANOR

Yes, and to think it should come so fully, so completely, and so soon.

FRANCIS

Soon, and most fully, and completely. Nothing to part us ever now.

ELEANOR

I cannot take it in. I loved you before. My love isn't greater. It couldn't be. But always there was that secret shrine, where I entered, and you would not. Now it is not secret any more. You have entered it, tasted its rapture, seen its glory, touched its peace. No more parting, no more reservations, no more secrets, or withholdings. Just one broad, onward, upward path — into the light — together — always together — nothing to trouble us, or part us, or separate us. Always, always love and God.

FRANCIS

Always love and God.

CURTAIN

ACT III

[*Same scene — three months later, ninth of April, afternoon — warm day rich with the voluptuous coming of spring — open windows —* FATHER NELSON *waiting for ladies — enter* NED.]

NED

How do, Father?

FATHER NELSON

Glad to see you, Mr. Wilde. [*Shake hands.*]

NED

Francis expected shortly?

FATHER NELSON

Before long, I imagine.

NED

Well, what do you think another trip to Washington will have done to him?

FATHER NELSON

He's been very busy, they say.

NED

Busy? Oh, yes.

FATHER NELSON

With his law practice.

NED

H'm. More likely his soul again.

FATHER NELSON

His soul is at peace at last.

NED

Don't you believe it. His soul will never be at peace, as long as he has it — or as long as it has him.

FATHER NELSON

I don't think he will ever change again. Since his return from Washington the last time, three months ago, his faith has grown daily, taken larger and larger possession of him.

NED

That's right enough. It will end by taking possession of him altogether.

FATHER NELSON

Well?

NED

But will it be well — for Eleanor?

FATHER NELSON

Eleanor? I don't understand.

NED

I say, when Francis enters the priesthood, will it be well for Eleanor?

FATHER NELSON

The priesthood?

NED

You don't mean to tell me you hadn't thought of it?

FATHER NELSON

Why — I can't say it hasn't occurred to me — with his temperament — and his association with Father White. But I put it aside as impossible. It is impossible.

NED

Why?

FATHER NELSON

Because — because —

NED

It is not impossible. And I think it is likely to come about, in view of his temperament — as you

say, and his association with Father White — as you say.

FATHER NELSON

I can't believe it.

NED

You may have to. You remember I had a convenient friend in Washington before. He's there still — and writes me, when interesting gossip comes up. "Hardinge thicker with the Catholics than ever," he says. "And I have it on good authority from them that they expect to make a priest of him. Hard on the Wade girl, though some might see a joke in it." Some might see a joke in it, Father. That is the tone in Washington.

FATHER NELSON

It can't be. It cannot be.

NED

It can be. It probably will be. I suppose you would like it.

FATHER NELSON

[*Disturbed.*] I? Like it?

NED

Why not? It means things for the church. To get a recruit from the heart of New England Uni-

tarianism — and such a recruit as Francis Hardinge.

FATHER NELSON

He would have a great career.

NED

A great career — might be Pope, for aught I know.

FATHER NELSON

He would not have ambition. He would give his whole life to service — and such a service. There isn't a man living who could do more for the Church's cause in this country than he. But Miss Wade — poor Miss Wade!

NED

Yes, poor Miss Wade! Poor Eleanor! Though I wonder you think of her. Oh, the service is all right, and the glory is all right. But poor Eleanor! The Church's cause in this country is a great thing to you. But would you smash a human life for it, ruin, blast the happiness of such a soul as she?

FATHER NELSON

Millions of lives have been smashed and blasted for the cause of the Church.

NED

And you dare to stand there and tell me so?

FATHER NELSON

Smashed and blasted, so far as this world goes. They are richer and more perfect for it now.

NED

Ah!

FATHER NELSON

But how can I help saying, "Poor, poor Miss Wade?" Oh, Mr. Wilde, it isn't true, some gossip, some trick, some joke, as your correspondent says.

NED

Don't you see, it is the truth of the thing that makes the joke? I catch the joke, but I don't laugh at it. [*Draws* FATHER *to the window.*] Just breathe this April air. Draw it in. Fill your soul with it. You are old, and grey, and for fifty years you have done your best to strangle everything this spring wind speaks of. Yet you feel it. You can't help feeling it. It thrills every nerve in you. It speaks of love, and the heart of youth, and the joy of loving. It cries out love, preaches and teaches love, with a tender, voluptuous intensity that is almost agony. The birth of all things, the re-birth of all things, for ever and ever and ever. Isn't it natural, isn't it beautiful, isn't it divine? And you would crush it in these two, for a harsh, ideal, impossible,

abstraction, which may mean nothing and lead nowhere. Father Nelson, as a man I couldn't ask a pleasanter companion, but as a priest I hate you, hate you.

[*Enter* Mrs. Wade.]

MRS. WADE

Ned, Ned. What is the matter?

NED

Nothing whatever.

MRS. WADE

It didn't sound so.

NED

I was merely calling the Father's attention to a few simple facts in natural history.

MRS. WADE

Ah? That accounts for your vehemence. I thought you said you hated something.

NED

Oh, no. I couldn't have said that. I don't hate anything. Francis expected soon?

MRS. WADE

In a day or two.

FATHER NELSON

Has he said anything?

MRS. WADE

Anything? Anything what?

FATHER NELSON

About — about his religious attitude?

MRS. WADE

Of course he doesn't write to me. Whatever of that kind he may write to Eleanor, she keeps to herself — very naturally.

FATHER NELSON

But you don't hear any hint of any new development?

MRS. WADE

You seem so eager, Father. What new development?

FATHER NELSON

I don't know.

MRS. WADE

You puzzle me. Every day, until Francis left, his interest seemed to grow deeper and stronger, though he isn't a man to say much. I shouldn't suppose it possible that anything could change him now.

FATHER NELSON

Change him? Oh, no.

NED

The Father is dodging, with deplorable pusillanimity. Has Francis said anything about going into the priesthood?

MRS. WADE

The priesthood? What can you mean? He couldn't go into the priesthood and marry Eleanor.

NED

No, I've gathered that.

FATHER NELSON

I don't wonder you can't grasp it, dear lady. But Mr. Wilde hears from Washington that the story there is that Mr. Hardinge thinks — of — taking the vows. I can't believe it possible.

MRS. WADE

Ned! What does this mean? Become a priest? Give up marrying Eleanor? What does it mean?

NED

If you start a stone rolling down hill, it goes on rolling. If you start a logical mind, like Hardinge's,

it goes on minding, till there's nothing left to mind. I told you to let him alone.

MRS. WADE

What does it all mean? What have you heard?

NED

Only that Francis is doing other things in Washington besides law. He is with White and the rest daily and nightly and the common talk is — what Father Nelson tells you.

MRS. WADE

I don't believe it. It's only talk — idle talk. You don't believe it, Father?

FATHER NELSON

I don't know what to think. I remember things Mr. Hardinge said to me, before he went. I paid no attention to them.

MRS. WADE

What things?

FATHER NELSON

As to the sacredness, the beauty of our calling. The obligation of leaving everything for service. The immense work to be done and the few hands to do it. I took it that he was speaking abstractly,

never thought of any personal application, took it to be the general zeal and interest of recent conversion. It sounds differently now.

MRS. WADE

It was abstract, it was impersonal. Of course it was. People don't do such things in these days.

NED

People will do fool things, as long as there are fool things for them to do.

FATHER NELSON

People go into the priesthood, dear madam — thousands of them.

MRS. WADE

I know it. But they are trained to it, brought up to it. They don't do it suddenly, off-hand, like this, wrecking others' lives. Why, Eleanor, Father, just think of Eleanor.

FATHER NELSON

I do think of her.

NED

Oh, yes, he thinks of her. I was making him think of her when you came in. That was why I

said I hated him. That in the twentieth century, a life so lovely, so perfect, so divine as hers should be torn to pieces for nothing!

FATHER NELSON

Not for nothing. I can't let you say for nothing. It might be well that many lives, even beautiful as hers, should be torn to pieces, as you say, for God.

NED

Oh!

MRS. WADE

Father, Father, you go too far. Let us keep the practical before us. I love the blessed saints and martyrs; but that is no reason why my Eleanor should be martyred. There are plenty for the priesthood without Francis, thousands of ways in which his intelligence and his manhood can be put to service without that. Think of her love. It isn't a common love. It isn't a passing whim or fancy. It is her whole life. Take it away from her, and what would there be left? Oh, it would be cruel, cruel! It's impossible.

[*Enter* ELEANOR — *all through this and following scenes, she "fey" in* SIR WALTER'S *phrase, full of an unnatural, extravagant rapture.*]

ELEANOR

Ah, I'm so glad you're all here together. I want to talk.

NED

That's unusual.

ELEANOR

It is unusual. I had rather listen generally. But today I'm so happy, I must pour it out. What do you suppose I've been doing? Guess, Ned.

NED

Writing to Francis.

ELEANOR

No, because he's coming in a day or two. So where would be the use? Guess, Father.

FATHER NELSON

Reading — something good.

ELEANOR

Well, no,— I suppose I might have been.

NED

I'm glad you weren't.

ELEANOR

Ned!

MRS. WADE

But tell us.

ELEANOR

I have been planning our trip for this summer. Of course, I shall plan it all over again with Francis. But that will be double pleasure, won't it?

MRS. WADE

Oh, yes.

ELEANOR

This April air — ah, how sweet it is — makes one think of travel and adventure. Doesn't it, Ned?

NED

The April air? Oh, yes.

ELEANOR

I had my window open, and leaned way, way out into it. The sparrows were twittering in the vines. The white clouds floated over in long flocks, dreamily. Everything seemed soft to breathe, delicate to touch, sweet to linger with. And I felt as if I longed to be wandering, wandering, with Francis, through the strange delicious places of the world. You know, don't you? [*No one answers.*] You don't seem to know. You're jealous of my happiness, I think, all of you. And it will be the Rhine, with the slow, poking steamers, and the old castles. And it will be

Switzerland. Ned, you remember when we were in Switzerland together last? You surely remember that.

NED

I remember.

ELEANOR

You *are* jealous. There's no doubt of it. And then Venice. Francis has never been in Venice. Think of it. Oh, it seems almost too much. I love Venice so — even alone. The long quiet slipping of the gondolas through the moonlight — even alone. [*She goes to the window and looks out.*] Ah, don't you catch that breath of spring? It seems to come to me from Fiesole, straight, out of the old amphitheatre, heavy with violets. You were there, too, with us, Ned. Why, how many places we have visited together. Probably you've forgotten half of them.

NED

I haven't forgotten a single one.

ELEANOR

Then I hope some day you'll be married, to a nice girl, and visit them again with her.

NED

That's extremely kind of you.

ELEANOR

But you, Father, and mamma, should be with us in Rome. Yet I don't want you. Isn't that selfish of me? Just this time we must be by ourselves, you know, our own two selves, all alone, with the ghosts of the old Romans, and the Sistine chapel, and the Holy Father, and the silent Campagna. There we shall be really alone, shan't we? Father, you know what it will mean to Francis and me to be in Rome together now, don't you?

FATHER NELSON

Yes, I know — that is — I hope — I'm sorry, Miss Wade, I can't stay to hear more about your journey. But I have another visit —

ELEANOR

You think I'm too happy to need you just now. There's something in that. And you are always so ready, when I do need you. Still your sacred calling doesn't forbid your being occasionally with those who are happy, does it? It must be pleasanter. There, I won't keep you. Only — give me your blessing, before you go.

[*The* FATHER *touches her head lightly as she bows it, makes the sign of the cross over it, tries hard to speak, but cannot trust himself, and goes out.*]

ELEANOR

He seems depressed, doesn't he? Sad, almost? And that is so unlike him. What can be the matter, I wonder? Oh, dear, I suppose I am very unsympathetic, but I can't feel sad today, not even to please Father Nelson.

NED

To please him?

ELEANOR

You know what I mean.

MRS. WADE

He certainly would not wish you to feel sad.

ELEANOR

Of course not. But on such a spring day as this, with all April in the air, love in the air —

NED

Some think those are the saddest days.

ELEANOR

People who are unhappy, yes — who haven't love. Perhaps the thought of Rome made the Father homesick. He was there so long, you know. And the thought of Rome on such a day, the Borghese gardens, with their flowers and sunlight. And then

Naples, of course we shall go to Naples, and Capri, and Sorrento. You remember, both of you, that day at Capri, when the sky was so blue, and the warm wind so delicate, and the red cactus fruit that the girl sold us in the Villa of Tiberius. You remember, Ned?

NED

I remember.

ELEANOR

What is the matter with you all?

MRS. WADE

Matter? Nothing.

ELEANOR

But I am so full of joy, and life, and enthusiasm, and not one of you will say a word. What is it?

MRS. WADE

You are mistaken, dear. Your rapture is so lovely, we don't need to say anything.

NED

Yes, that's it.

MRS. WADE

[*Smiling feebly.*] You know we aren't all going on a wedding tour. And our sympathetic rapture seems a little cold beside yours.

ELEANOR

It certainly does.

MRS. WADE

But if Ned will excuse me, I will leave you for a while. I have one or two things to attend to.

NED

I don't know that I can excuse you.

MRS. WADE

Oh, yes, you can. Don't think, dear, that I don't — [*Exit.*]

ELEANOR

Don't think she doesn't what? It's rather strange. Can it be as she says, that I'm so full of delight that it gives the rest of you that chilled feeling? It may be. I am full of delight, running over with delight, so happy. It isn't unnatural, is it, Ned? And then this April day. I keep going back to this April day.

NED

And Francis's coming.

ELEANOR

Yes, Francis's coming. I had a note this morning, saying he should be here today or tomorrow and would telegraph. I may hear at any moment.

NED

What else did he say?

ELEANOR

You are impertinent. Yet, somehow with you I don't mind it. I can tell you more than almost any one.

NED

That's pleasant, I'm sure.

ELEANOR

It was a short note. His notes have all been short lately — because he has been so busy. But there's been something very, oh, very — well, you wouldn't understand.

NED

No, of course, I shouldn't understand.

ELEANOR

I didn't mean to hurt you. But you don't care for that spiritual world which means so much to Francis and me.

NED

No, I don't, that's a fact.

ELEANOR

His letters have been so full of it lately, so beautifully, so tenderly full of it. It brings me so near to

him. Yes, it must be Francis's coming that gives me such a strange, delicious joy, such a presentiment of endless happiness, Francis's coming and the April air. Yet you don't seem to feel it.

NED

Francis's coming? Well, not so much as I might. But the April air, oh, yes. You know I love you, Eleanor. Smile, oh, yes. As much as you please. But I love you. And this April air, it whispers love, it cries love, it sings love. Days in Switzerland, days in Sorrento, flowers, wind, laughter — near to tears, and tears to laughter. And the awful difference between being one and two in this barren world. And to have to look back instead of forward. In one way it is better, because it is less disappointing. But it doesn't lead to rapture, oh, no. And so the April air is drenched with love for me, too. But you see, love disappointed, blighted, isn't so rapturous.

ELEANOR

I can't understand you, Ned. You are a strange creature.

NED

Yes. Man has been, since Adam.

ELEANOR

You don't love me. That is nonsense.

NED

Of course, of course.

ELEANOR

You are a child of moods, whims, fancies, always living with laughter and dreams. Even if you did love and your love were blighted, you would go on laughing, in your heart, as well as with your lips.

NED

I should. I should. I don't deny it.

ELEANOR

But if I were to lose Francis, if — if he were to die, or anything strange, unforeseen, horrible, should come up to separate us, what would there be left for me? No laughter. No more April. Just one black gulf, so far as this world goes. But why think of such things, when nothing can come up? It is too foolish — too foolish.

NED

Too foolish, indeed. Never think of such things. There is trouble enough for us all, without looking for it.

[*Enter* SERVANT.]

SERVANT

A telegram, Miss Hardinge.

ELEANOR

Ah, yes. [*Exit* SERVANT. *She tears open the dispatch.*] Francis will be here at four-thirty. And it wants only a minute or two of that now.

NED

Francis coming in two minutes. That means that I must go.

ELEANOR

Why should it? Why should you go, until —

NED

Thank you. That's a very civil effort.

ELEANOR

I only meant —

NED

I understand what you meant perfectly. Good-bye.

ELEANOR

But must you really go?

NED

The necessity is moral, but it's strong.

ELEANOR

Then I shall sit down by the window, and breathe

the April air, and read. What is this? The Imitation. I will read the Imitation.

NED

I think I had better stay rather than that. Don't read the Imitation. Read a love poem. The world is full of them. I don't know what I'm saying. Good-bye — Eleanor.

[*He goes out quickly.* ELEANOR *sits down by the window, with the book in her hand, first gazes out, then opens it and reads.*]

"Why dost thou wish to see what it is not permitted thee to have? The world passes away, and the desire of it.

"A joyous going abroad often brings forth a mournful return, and a late watch spent merrily makes a sad morning.

"So all carnal joy enters pleasantly, but in the end it bites and kills.

"Thou thinkest perhaps to be satisfied, but thou canst not attain to it.

"If thou couldest see all things at once before thee, what would it be but an empty show?

"Shut thy door upon thee and call to thee Jesus thy beloved.

"Stay with him in thy cell; for nowhere else wilt thou find so great peace."

[*She lets the book fall in her lap, leans her face on her hand and gazes out the window* — FRANCIS *enters quietly* — *she does not hear him* — *he stands a moment, looking at her* — *he is haggard and worn.*]

FRANCIS

Eleanor.

ELEANOR

Oh! [*She runs to him and throws her arms round his neck. He holds her a moment, with her head on his breast. Then she looks up at him.*] Francis, how pale, how ill you look. What is the matter? Have you been ill?

FRANCIS

[*Still holding her in his arms, with extraordinary tenderness and gentleness.*] Ill, dear? No. Not at all.

ELEANOR

But you look ill — horribly ill.

FRANCIS

The fatigue of the journey, perhaps. I did not sleep well last night.

ELEANOR

Fatigue? But you are so used to journeys. Oh, no, there is something else. Tell me.

FRANCIS

[*Leads her very gently to sofa, sits down by her, but without touching her.*] There is something else, Eleanor. Of what use would it be to conceal it? Eleanor,— I have come to feel that it is my duty, my highest, overwhelming, only duty, to go into the — priesthood.

ELEANOR

[*Sitting up straight and staring at him, almost wildly.*] Francis! The priesthood! You! No marriage! The priesthood! Oh, my God! [*She buries her head in the pillows and sobs. He leans forward, with his face in his hands, his whole body shaken by silent agony, but says nothing.*]

CURTAIN

ACT IV

[*Same scene — one month later, May seventh, afternoon.* MRS. WADE, *enter* FATHER NELSON.]

MRS. WADE

Oh, Father. [*Shake hands.*]

FATHER NELSON

Well? No more hope, I suppose?

MRS. WADE

None.

FATHER NELSON

Of course there would be none. Yet I thought, as the time came for Francis to sail for Italy, there might yet —

MRS. WADE

How could there be? When he came back from Washington a month ago, it was settled. Francis would never change. He grows more and more fixed, I imagine.

FATHER NELSON

And he sails tomorrow?

MRS. WADE

And he sails tomorrow.

FATHER NELSON

You have all talked to him, I know.

MRS. WADE

Talked to him, yes. We don't see him much. But I have talked to him. His father has talked to him. Every one has talked to him. He is perfectly gentle, perfectly calm,— and perfectly immovable.

FATHER NELSON

And Eleanor, she has seen him recently?

MRS. WADE

Not recently. She has seen him very little since that first long interview.

FATHER NELSON

When he reconciled her?

MRS. WADE

Reconciled her? Oh, I suppose so. She doesn't talk to me much. She never talks to any one much. She never has a word of anything but love, adoration almost, for Francis. But I know her heart is broken. [*Pause.*] Oh, Father, what do you think of it? Can it be right? Can it be right? I have

asked you so many times. I have asked myself so many times. Can it be right?

FATHER NELSON

We know it is right. It is as God wills. And what he wills is right, though we may not see it at the moment.

MRS. WADE

I know. I know. But I do not see it. It seems so strange. Where one is born and bred to such things — but Francis has been bred so differently. To have this come all at once, when he had such a future before him, a great future.

FATHER NELSON

He may have a greater future.

MRS. WADE

And not himself alone, but others. His father — think what it means to his father. And I — Eleanor's happiness is my happiness. And Eleanor's happiness is gone for ever.

FATHER NELSON

[*Very gently.*] Eleanor, too, loves God.

MRS. WADE

Oh, yes.

FATHER NELSON

I can't understand it, Mrs. Wade, any more than you can. I only know that it must lead to good. These immense, these terrible sacrifices — when God asks them, he asks them only for a great and glorious purpose. We must believe it, and be patient, and submit.

MRS. WADE

Submit. I know. But it is hard.

FATHER NELSON

It is hard. And, oh, pitiful. Life is pitiful. If I could help it — if I could change it —!

MRS. WADE

You can help thus far, at any rate. Francis is coming here this afternoon, to say good-bye to Eleanor. He wished it, and she wished it. I expect him any moment. Father, tell me that you will join me in one last appeal to him. Of course we cannot ask him to give up his journey to Italy. But let us beg him not to take any irrevocable step hastily, to consider long and carefully before he makes a final decision. You will help me in this, Father, won't you?

FATHER NELSON

[*Moved and distressed.*] Ought I to do even that? To interfere with a manifest vocation?

MRS. WADE

But is it a manifest vocation, coming so all in a day?

FATHER NELSON

But sometimes those are the most intense, the most significant.

MRS. WADE

Not this. Not this. I can't believe it. You will help me?

FATHER NELSON

I cannot promise. I must do as it is given me to do at the moment. Something I will say.

[*Enter* NED.]

NED

[*Abrupt, as usual, no greetings.*] Well, you wonder why I've come, I suppose. I couldn't keep away. I know he sails tomorrow. I expected he would be here. Is he?

MRS. WADE

No.

NED

But he will be. I want to say my last say to him. It won't do any good what anybody says. But it will relieve my feelings. Isn't it disgusting, hideous?

MRS. WADE

Why, why —

NED

You're a woman. And a convert. Isn't it disgusting and hideous, Father Nelson?

FATHER NELSON

Neither.

NED

Ah! But it is disgusting and hideous just the same. In the twentieth century! When the whole nineteenth century did nothing but show us what nature meant and the beauty of it, to go and abuse nature, crush it, trample on it, like a stupid fanatic of the Middle Ages.

FATHER NELSON

The Middle Ages had their good points. The nineteenth century made an idol of nature. Idols should be overthrown.

NED

Yes, and other idols set up in their places. So goes the world. I care nothing about idols and centuries, just this man and this woman. Why, think what he might have done and been, with his intelligence, his power. If it had been a useless fool like

me, who had chosen to put a cowled extinguisher on himself. But Hardinge.

FATHER NELSON

And isn't he going to use his intelligence and his power? He is to be no monk under a cowled extinguisher, but a priest, a worker, working at the noblest and most lasting work in the whole world.

NED

But Eleanor, Eleanor!

FATHER NELSON

[*With infinite pity.*] Ah, yes, Eleanor.

MRS. WADE

Do you know, it almost makes me wonder whether Francis ever really cared for Eleanor — as she cares for him.

FATHER NELSON

Oh, Mrs. Wade.

NED

You're quite wrong there — quite wrong. It's because he cared so enormously for her that he's carried away by this other passion. He has the capacity for caring for things, as neither you, nor I, nor Father Nelson here can dream of. Eleanor can.

Oh, yes. Care for her! Half the joy, the glory, the intensity, of this new vocation comes from his having cared for her so overwhelmingly and getting such a satisfaction from tearing her out of his heart. He loves her as he loves religion and God. Ah, if she could have cared for me, who have no religion and no God.

FATHER NELSON

Mr. Wilde!

NED

Father Nelson! No God of yours, at any rate. Or, at least, if she could have cared for him wisely. For, after all, it is her own fault. I told her what would happen. I told you all what would happen. Why couldn't she let him alone, make a peaceful husband of him, keep him away from these heights on the smooth, green level of common life? You are all getting what you deserved. She is getting what she deserved.

MRS. WADE

Don't be cruel, Ned.

NED

Cruel! Oh, God! Just because she has deserved it doesn't make it right, does it? It isn't I who am cruel. Can I see Eleanor?

MRS. WADE

[*Gasps.*] See Eleanor? Oh, yes, why not? I'll go and ask her.

NED

Thank you.

MRS. WADE

But don't tell her she has deserved it. [*Exit.*]

NED

An excellent suggestion. It wouldn't have occurred to me. All these woes come from religion. You read Lucretius?

FATHER NELSON

No.

NED

It doesn't surprise me. But you should.

FATHER NELSON

The woes do not come from religion.

NED

From what then?

FATHER NELSON

The weakness of human nature.

NED

Ah? But religion shouldn't aggravate the weakness of human nature. It should relieve it.

FATHER NELSON

It does.

NED

Don't think I don't understand the joy of religion, the ecstasy of God. But it's a selfish ecstasy, in one word the worst of selfish ecstasies, because it thinks itself unselfish.

FATHER NELSON

That just shows you don't understand it.

NED

And for selfishness, where is Eleanor in all this? I ask you, where is Eleanor? What of her? Is she to be simply sacrificed, cast away, thrown into the dust heap, to save his soul? Is his miserable soul worth one of her tears?

FATHER NELSON

But she has religion too.

NED

Religion? Yes — will religion give her a hearth, a home, a cradle, the sunshine of warm human love?

There never was a heart so tender and beautiful as hers, and you want to chill it, and numb it, and wither it, with religion.

FATHER NELSON

How you love her, don't you?

NED

Yes, I love her. You know that well enough. And she knows it, by this time. She might have my soul to play with and throw on the dust heap, if she wanted to. I've no use for it. Oh, yes, I love her. What difference does that make?

FATHER NELSON

[*After a pause.*] May not this come to work for you?

NED

Work for me? To be sure. You want me to stand back and applaud Hardinge and see her suffer contentedly, because it may work for me. It would be pretty, wouldn't it?

FATHER NELSON

You exaggerate.

NED

She doesn't love me, she never will love me, she can't love me.

FATHER NELSON

Who can say what time may do in these matters?

NED

I can. It is just as certain that she will never love me, as that I shall never cease loving her. The only little excuse for you in the whole affair is that you can't understand either her love, or her suffering, or her nature.

FATHER NELSON

I am older than you.

NED

I love to hear you say that. When a man — or woman — gets the worst of it in an argument with a junior, he always falls back on that, "I am older than you." How he wishes he weren't! And then, I've told you before, it's better for me to love Eleanor than to marry her. This way I can go on adoring her always.

FATHER NELSON

Ah, but don't you see, that applies to Francis as well? Won't it be better for him to carry the perfect image of her always in his heart, and not profane it by the rubs and wear and tear of even the loveliest of married lives?

NED

You are older than I — and ought to be wiser. I've also told you before that those consolations are feeble. If you could offer me the lady — which you can't. But Francis — he might have her, and all the peace, and all the pleasure, and all the long, intimate solace of mature, divine companionship. He might have her — and he won't. Then you come and talk to me about religion!

[*Enter* Mrs. Wade.]

NED

And Eleanor?

MRS. WADE

Asks you to excuse her.

NED

It is natural.

MRS. WADE

She expects Francis every moment — and — and that will be hard for her.

NED

I hope it will be hard for him.

FATHER NELSON

You know better than any one how hard it will be. How does she seem, Mrs. Wade?

MRS. WADE

She is calm, wonderfully calm, as she has been all along. But, oh, Father, it breaks my heart to see her. She is so quiet, and so pale, and there is a light in her eyes, which is — different. She answers, attends to what you say, more gently perhaps than ever. But she attends without attending. She seems to speak, and move, and think, in a long, strange dream.

FATHER NELSON

Yes, I've noticed that, too, when I've been with her. And I've felt almost afraid of disturbing the dream.

NED

You show remarkable wisdom — for your age. Don't disturb her dream. Ah, if she could go on and on in it for ever! Why must he come to her today? Why couldn't he let her alone?

MRS. WADE

He could hardly have done anything else. And she wished him to come.

NED

And she wished him to come. She wants to drink all the bitterness. That's human.

[*Enter* MR. HARDINGE.]

MR. HARDINGE

Mrs. Wade. Father Nelson. Mr. Wilde. [*Shakes hands all round.*] My son not here?

MRS. WADE

Not yet. We expect him every moment. We mean to plead with him for the last time. You will join us, won't you?

MR. HARDINGE

It is quite useless, I imagine.

NED

Oh, quite.

MRS. WADE

Useless for now. But later it may have its effect.

MR. HARDINGE

You'll excuse me, Mrs. Wade. You know how I feel. I came here to express my sympathy once more, my unconquerable disgust, at the whole thing. But you — as I've told you, I think you're bound to accept it.

MRS. WADE

Bound to accept the ruin of my daughter's whole life?

MR. HARDINGE

Why not?

MRS. WADE

I don't accept it.

MR. HARDINGE

Then I'm glad to see you agree with me in rejecting this antiquated survival, this fossilized relic of a mediaeval past, the celibate priesthood. Nothing more false, more unnatural, more inhuman, was ever inflicted upon suffering humanity.

FATHER NELSON

Mr. Hardinge, perhaps you don't realize what the celibate priesthood has done for mankind, as no other priesthood could have done it. In this mingled world there can be no great good without some evil.

MR. HARDINGE

Has done. Ah, yes. It's gone by now.

NED

Gone by. The twentieth century has nothing to do with the Middle Ages.

FATHER NELSON

We know so little about the twentieth century yet. In fact, we know only one thing about it: it will be very unlike the nineteenth. Perhaps it will learn a few good lessons from the Middle Ages. It might.

NED

From the Middle Ages! Witches, red-hot plough shares, and the devil.

FATHER NELSON

Even the devil may have been better than nothing. And the devil was not confined to the Middle Ages.

MRS. WADE

But, Mr. Hardinge, I was not discussing the celibate priesthood. It was my daughter.

MR. HARDINGE

But you can't separate your daughter from the celibate priesthood, just at present.

NED

A woman will always separate the things she wants from the things she doesn't want.

MRS. WADE

So she will, if a man will let her.

NED

It is Francis Hardinge who is mixing things for you now, not we.

MRS. WADE

Just so. But Francis is a man.

MR. HARDINGE

And this gentleman — does he think very much about your daughter?

FATHER NELSON

You wrong me, Mr. Hardinge. I would give my life to save Miss Wade this terrible sorrow.

NED

Then will you help us appeal to Francis?

FATHER NELSON

So far as my conscience will let me.

NED

Your conscience! You would give your life which nobody wants; but you won't give your conscience, which is of no use to you and might be of a little to the rest of us.

[*Enter* FRANCIS. *He comes quietly into the room, without any exchange of greetings. His dress a trifle more severe than of old, but without the least affectation.*]

FRANCIS

May I see Eleanor?

MRS. WADE

Certainly. But, Francis, this is a farewell, I sup-

pose, for all of us. We don't want to worry you unnecessarily —

NED

Yes, we do.

MRS. WADE

But we happen to be here together. You will listen to one last appeal? [FRANCIS *inclines his head.*] Of course, you think it useless. Doubtless it is, now. But there may come a time — Father Nelson, speak to him.

FATHER NELSON

I can say only one thing, Mr. Hardinge. I've said it before, but I can't say it too often. Are you sure, sure this is serious, sure it is permanent, will endure?

MR. HARDINGE

That's it. It can't endure. With his antecedents, and his temper, it is impossible.

FRANCIS

[*With the utmost solemnity.*] I am sure.

MR. HARDINGE

Ah!

FATHER NELSON

[*After a pause.*] I can say no more, Mrs. Wade. If he were wavering, if he were uncertain, hesitating

I would conjure him to delay. When he answers me in that manner, "I am sure," the voice of God has spoken. I can say no more.

MRS. WADE

But I can. We can never be so sure as that of the voice of God. Francis, you know I sympathize with you, you know I feel the beauty of what you are striving for, oh, so much. But it isn't the only thing in the world, not the only road to God, not the only field of helpfulness. Think what you are giving up. Think of Eleanor. Think of all who love you. Think of the immense good you can do the church as a layman, working as a common man among common men, as a gentleman among gentlemen, in a way a priest never could. Think of what you and Eleanor could do together.

FRANCIS

[*Inclines his head gravely.*] I have thought of all these things.

MR. HARDINGE

[*As* Mrs. Wade *gives up, with a gesture of despair.*] Think of them again. Keep thinking of them. You inherit common sense from generations of stubborn Puritans. It must tell at last against this nightmare. Why, Francis, this is America, in

the twentieth century. This is the bright, blessed sunlight of New England. Do you realize that you are stepping into the grave, into the grave, the grave? Deliberately shutting out all light, all life, all progress, and stepping into the grave? The world moves, my boy. Don't think you can be a brake on it. Move with it. Nothing else is life. Here are these great American millions looking forward, pressing forward. Don't you want to help them? Think how much you can help them, steady them, with your clear intelligence, your firmness of moral grasp. And you turn your face backward towards the great night. It is madness.

FRANCIS

[*Always very quietly.*] I hope it is not madness. I do not seem to myself to be looking backward, but forward, very far, far forward, to an eternal day.

NED

It's likely you'll listen to me, after them, isn't it? But they've touched only the outside. The real point is that you can't go on believing. Why, modern thought won't let you believe. It's no use. Are the lessons of the nineteenth century going to be all thrown away? Can you live apart from them and forget them? The legacy of the nineteenth century to us was science, the love of truth, go straight to

the facts and nothing else. You can't get over that, or get round it, or get away from it. Now you are just leaving facts on one side altogether.

FRANCIS

It is you who are behindhand, Ned, you who are looking backward, you who are outgrown. What did the nineteenth century with its science do for mankind? They asked it for bread and it gave them stones and even stones that crumble. When you use a microscope, you get a very narrow field of vision. The nineteenth century groped with its microscope so long for such little facts, that it missed the one enormous fact of all — God. The twentieth century, if it has to choose between science and God, will not hesitate for a moment. Mrs. Wade, I should be glad to see Eleanor.

MRS. WADE

Yes, yes, you shall. I will go and speak to her.

MR. HARDINGE

There is nothing more for me to do here. I shall be at the station tonight, Francis.

[*Exit with* MRS. WADE.]

FATHER NELSON

I shall be at the station also. So I will not bid

good-bye now. Oh, Mr. Hardinge, be gentle. I wish so it might all be different. I have prayed so it might all be different. Even yet I can't help hoping. Are you coming, Mr. Wilde?

NED

No, Father, not for a moment or two. I sha'n't be at the station. I want to bid good-bye now.

FATHER NELSON

Yes? I wish you might still say something that would be of use. How I wish it! [*Exit.*]

NED

Oh, I can't say anything that will be of use. And I know you don't want me. Never mind. I won't go quite yet. My God, Hardinge, or rather, your God, think of that girl. I don't talk about your beliefs, or your religion, or helping your fellows, or stepping into graves, or the rest of the rubbish. Think of that girl. You know what she is. There are few like her. The depth of woman's love in her, the divine, pure tenderness; even I, whom she doesn't love, have seen it in her eyes. How you must have seen it there! Her woman's heart, and her woman's and man's brain. She understands all things, she hopes all things, she loves all things. To have your love all wrapped round with hers, so soft, so tender,

so sweet, so delicate, yet strong enough to keep out the whole world. And her hands, Hardinge, think of the touch of her hands, on yours, on your forehead — they would drive madness out of it.

FRANCIS

[*After a pause, with obvious effort.*] How you love her!

NED

Of course I love her. Would I throw her away? The hands for me! The eyes for me! To look into them, and look, and look. Ah, well.

FRANCIS

You deserve her more than I, I think. It might — it might be better for her to have you. Who knows?

NED

Pshaw! She never would love me. She never could love me. Not in millions of years would all my love and service win her. She loves you. She will never love any one but you. I want her to be happy. As that ancient imbecile in the black frock remarks, I would give my life to save her sorrow. And I can't, I can't, I can't. I say again, think of her, Hardinge. Think of her future, its long solitude, its cramped hours, its chilly consolations, its long, dreary, hopeless nights. Think of your future, with nothing but

your God, whom you only half believe in, and the agony, and the torment, and the dull, maddening ennui, much, much worse than any torment. [*Goes close and speaks in his ear.*] Hardinge, think of the girl. I'm going now.

[*Enter* ELEANOR — *in black* — *pale.*]

NED

[*Pays no attention to her* — *shakes hands briefly with* FRANCIS.] Good-bye.

[*Exit slowly, but without looking back.*]

ELEANOR

[*Comes and stands near him, very controlled at first, though effort shows.*] I am glad you came, glad to tell you once more how wholly I approve of what you are doing, more than approve of it. It is grand, it is noble, it is worthy of you, it is worthy of me, of your love for me.

FRANCIS

Eleanor.

ELEANOR

Worthy of your love for me. I know how you love me. I have never doubted, never mistrusted, never questioned, never had one moment of disloyalty to you or God. I taught you to love God.

FRANCIS

Eleanor.

[*Pause. Then suddenly she throws herself into his arms in an agony of sobbing. He holds her and quiets her without speaking. Then leads her to sofa — seats her by him gently. At first, she hides her face, but gradually, as he speaks, she lifts it and looks at him.*]

FRANCIS

Eleanor, my darling, I know your love as you know mine. I know what you are enduring. I have endured. We shall endure. But God is with us. You taught me to love God. Yes, you taught me. And that knowledge has taught me a better, deeper way of loving you. Oh, Eleanor, if I could tell you, make you feel how this calling has come upon me. I know you do feel, the immense fulness of it, the blessed assurance of it. Oh, God's work to do in the world. And the few there are to do it. I do not boast of myself. I know my own unworthiness in so many ways. But some things I can do that others cannot. So can you. We must do them, we joy to do them,— for God. Yes, you taught me to love God. The fulness of that love, the richness of that love, the grandeur of that love! And, Eleanor, in that common love we come nearer to each other

than by any earthly love we ever could, nearer, nearer, all earthly bonds, all earthly littleness dropping away, until at last we touch in him, where nothing can separate us, ever, any more. And this sacrifice of ours, even in itself it is something done for God. The world of today does not understand those things, it hugs itself in its sleek propriety, its trim convention, its negative goodness. It needs just such examples of really giving up something, really giving up everything — for God only, for God always, and all in all. Eleanor, you taught me. I am not worthy of you yet, not worthy of my love for you. But I will try to be. [*During the last part of this speech she has gazed directly at him, pale, speechless, but with divine sympathy and love in her face. As he rises now, she rises too. He goes toward door. She remains standing in centre of stage, not looking at him.*] Eleanor, pray for me and I will pray for you, and we shall be one in God. [*He goes out. She falls on her knees, her hands clasped and uplifted, her eyes shut.*]

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